

BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN STAY-AT-HOME FATHERS AND THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

Building social skills: A qualitative study of relationships between stay-at-home fathers (SAHF) and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children is a presentation of two SAHF-child dyad case studies. With the rise in the number of SAHFs, observational data between SAHFs and their children is lacking in the literature. The purpose and primary focus of this study was to examine the interactions between SAHFs and their preschool children, focusing on father involvement. A secondary focus for this study was to explore the availability and responsibility of SAHFs with their preschool children. Two research questions guided this study: 1.) “What types of interactions occur between SAHFs with their 2.5 to 4-year-old children?” and 2.) “What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?”

Data for each case study consisted of an initial interview with the SAHF, two observations between the SAHF and child, and two stimulated recall interviews within 48 hours of observations. Themes found with Case Study One, Dan and Lou were *teaching social skills, communication, “big kid,” basketball techniques, entertain herself, taking care of physical needs of child, sarcasm, know your child, “mindful,” and not missing out*. Themes with Case Study Two, Arnie and Sally were *teaching, “showing affection,” caring for Sally’s needs, safety concerns, “remaining engaged,” “just a bonding thing,” “let her figure it out,” and “testing boundaries.”* This study provides insight to the types of interactions observed between SAHFs and preschool children and SAHFs’ thoughts behind these interactions.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the two participants and their families who volunteered their time graciously. With SAHFs on the rise, it is important to know how children are being impacted. Although this dissertation does not encompass all aspects of a SAHF, without these participants, the influences of SAHFs on their children's social skills may be untold. The two SAHFs in this study added to the understanding of this phenomena.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my parents. Mom, I appreciated your "finish your paper" comments and encouragement. Dad, whether it was buying baby formula, groceries, or a booster seat, I appreciated your financial generosity. I also appreciate your time reading over my papers. Thank you, both, for helping me through this journey by taking care of the boys so I could attend classes, meetings, and writing retreats.

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## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

### **Contributors**

This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Professor Laura Stough, Professor Joyce Juntune, and Professor Noelle Sweany, all in the Department of Educational Psychology and Professor Robin Rackley in the Department of Teaching Learning and Culture.

All work for the dissertation was completed by the student under the advisement of Professor Laura Stough and Professor Joyce Juntune, both in the Department of Educational Psychology. Dr. Jennifer LeBlanc assisted with answering questions about the dissertation process.

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## NOMENCLATURE

SAHDs	Stay-at-home dads
SAHFs	Stay-at-home father's
SAHMs	Stay-at-home mother's
SAHPs	Stay-at-home parents

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“In every culture and historical period, men’s family roles are shaped by social, economic, and cultural pressures, resulting in unique fatherhood ideals and practices” (Coltrane, 2001, p. 5418).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, gender roles are changing for fathers. Until recently, a father’s role was to earn an income for his family and to serve as a male role-model (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Crespi and Ruspini (2015) discussed how fathers have typically fulfilled either a “breadwinning” or an involved father role. Today, fatherhood includes more flexible gender roles (Marsiglio et al., 2000) including fathers staying home to care for their children (e.g., Kramer, Kelly, & McCulloch, 2015; Medved & Rawlins, 2011; Rochlen, McKelley, & Whittaker, 2010). In a study on stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs), Solomon (2014a) suggests a change in masculinity supporting “...men’s engagement in family life” (p. 23) has occurred. This relatively new male role in family life was explored in this study concerning SAHF-child interactions.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

As gender roles have shifted over the last decade, there has been an increase in men who are the primary caretakers for their children. In 2009, the Census Bureau estimated 158,000 SAHFs cared for over 290,000 children in the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). By 2011, the estimation increased to 176,000 SAHFs caring for over 322,000 children (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2010, 2012), representing a 6% increase. The U. S. Census Bureau reported “among fathers with a

wife in the workforce, 32 percent were a regular source of care for their children under age 15, up from 26 percent in 2002” (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2011, para. 1).

Within the Census Bureau’s definition of SAHFs, in 2016 an estimated 209,000 SAHFs cared for approximately 392,000 children (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2016).

Conversely, Latshaw (2011) estimated up to 1.4 million SAHFs were not identified by the U. S. Census Bureau due to stringent identifying criteria. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2012), SAHFs must meet the following criteria: (a) be married, (b) care for children younger than 15 years-old, (c) be out of the labor force at least one year, and (d) be married to an employed wife. Latshaw examined participants’ employment after becoming a SAHF. Of the 30 SAHFs interviewed, 60% indicated they had worked intermittently around family schedules (Latshaw, 2011). Given the U. S. Census Bureau’s definition of SAHFs, the SAHFs who worked intermittently in Latshaw’s (2011) study are not included in census data, thus leading to an underestimate of SAHFs nationwide.

In an analysis of the Current Population Survey (CPS) data, Kramer et al. (2015) discussed the increase in SAHFs from 1979 to 2009 who chose to stay home as compared to SAHFs who were “unable-to-work.” (p. 1659) The researchers found SAHFs who chose to stay home to care for their family represented 1% of fathers in 1979 with a rise to 22% by 2009. Both SAHFs who chose to stay home and those “unable-to-work” SAHFs’ numbers rose from 2% in 1979 to 3.5% in 2009 (Kramer et al., 2015). Kramer et al. (2015) estimated over 1.125 million children were in the

primary care of a SAHF between 2000 and 2009. It is evident that over time more SAHFs have become the primary caregiver of their children.

As the number of SAHFs has increased, new areas of research have emerged. The most common areas studied has been on masculine identities (e.g., Hegarty, 2016; Hunter, Riggs, & Augoustinos, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2016; Medved & Rawlins, 2011; Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2012), masculinity and social class (Liong, 2017), self-image (Merla, 2008; Rochlen, McKelley, Suizzo, Scringi, 2008), gender ideology (Kramer & Kramer, 2016), gender roles (e.g., Chesley, 2011; Chesley & Flood, 2017; Latshaw, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000), and other people's views and stereotypes of SAHFs (Hoewe, Appleman, & Stevens, 2017). Crespi and Ruspini (2015) found non-traditional fathers indicated their fathering role gave them "... meaning, fulfillment, [and] happiness" (p. 354). Most SAHF studies have focused on the perspectives and decision-making of fathers who choose to stay home rather than the children of SAHFs or the interactions between SAHFs with their children. However, Doucet (2016) points out that a father's reasons for staying home may change over time and thus the binaries used to identify SAHFs differs in sociological and feminist literature.

However, within new areas of research on SAHFs, a lack of diversity in the samples is a limitation (Heppner & Heppner, 2009). Fagan, Iglesias, and Kaufman (2016) noted the need for future research on ethnic and diverse fathers and their involvement with their children. Current SAHF research has been primarily conducted with white, heterosexual males (e.g., Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008; Solomon, 2014a, 2014b). Lee and Lee (2016) studied a more racially and ethnically diverse sample than

most SAHF studies and found the fathers enjoyed staying home to care for their children. However, Lee and Lee (2016) indicated a need for future research on diverse SAHF population samples.

Child Trends (2012) reported fathers with the highest percentage as primary caregivers of preschool children were found in Hispanic families, followed by Asian families, then white non-Hispanic families, and lastly Black families. Likewise, Parker and Wang (2013) found SAHFs consisted of only 6% of married fathers or fathers who lived with a partner. These SAHFs were typically not college educated nor white (Parker & Wang, 2013). However the rising number of diverse SAHFs indicates the need to study Asian and Latino SAHFs as well as lower-income SAHFs (Medved, 2016).

The rise in SAHFs has increased the number of fathers closely involved in children's lives. In 1994 the Father Initiative Program was initiated with the goal of reducing the number of absent fathers (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010). Since then, many researchers have studied the involvement of fathers with their children (e.g., Coltrane, 2001; Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2012). Father involvement research has studied the amount of time fathers spend taking care of their children (Wilson & Prior, 2010), fathers' relationships with their adolescent children (Carlson, 2006), fathers' involvement with their children's academic work (Farkas & Grolnick, 2010), and father involvement in play with their children (e.g., Garcia, 2014; Ivrendi & Isikoglu, 2010). To date, the literature on father involvement has primarily consisted of studies on fathers who worked at least part-time outside of the home (e.g., Bouchard, Lee, Asgary, & Pelletier, 2007; Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016; Rane & McBride, 2000). However,

McKelley and Rochlen (2016) stress the need for continued studies on fathers, including SAHFs. Therefore, this study focused on the quality and type of interactions between SAHFs and their preschool children.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the interactions between SAHFs and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children.

The primary focus for this study was interactions between the SAHFs and their children, however, a secondary focus of the study explored the availability and responsibility of SAHFs with their children.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What types of interactions occur between SAHFs with their 2.5 to 4-year-old children?
2. What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?

### **Positionality Statement**

As a researcher, my philosophical assumptions fall within the interpretive framework of social constructivism. I believe interactions with others influence our behaviors and beliefs and each individual constructs their own reality. Thoughts and interpretations about the world thus are interpreted in a different way by others given their personal experiences. Similarly, as a researcher, I bring my past experiences into the study.

Social cultural theorists such as Lev Vygotsky influence my viewpoints on social development and parenting. I agree with Vygotsky's view that a child learns through their interactions with other people, especially parents, and their environment (Vygotsky, 2009). I strongly believe the environment in which a child is raised shapes their later development, with parents serving as an important factor in shaping that environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1963, 1986). I believe studying interactions between SAHFs and children gave insight into the social environment built between SAHFs and their children.

Relatedly, I believe frequent positive interactions are needed between a parent and a child, however, emotions and stressors interfere with how an adult responds to or acts towards a child.

The inspiration for this study began when I noticed differences between my husband's interactions and my own interactions with our child during the times we had individual responsibility as the primary caretaker. My husband worked long shifts at his job followed by several days off at a time watching our newborn, while I studied. As I informally observed their interactions, I wondered what type of interactions occurred between children and SAHFs and how they might differ from typical interactions between children and their stay-at-home mothers.

For this study, I observed how SAHFs interacted with their children. My opinions and reactions to occurrences in the field may have differed from those of the SAHFs due to differing ideas on parenting and social development. I also acknowledge the possible gender differences in my assumptions, given I am a female conducting



research with male participants. To mitigate these personal assumptions, I used reflexive journaling throughout my study.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REIVEW

The purpose of this review is to examine research in three key areas (a) social development, (b) father-child involvement, and (c) SAHFs. Research from the three areas provided the theoretical backdrop for exploring the social interactions between SAHFs and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children.

#### **Social Development**

Social development was defined by Susskind (2007) as "...the change over time in an individual's understanding of, attitudes concerning, and behavior toward others....these changes are perceived to occur due to socialization processes as well as physical and cognitive maturation" (p. 2). Saracho and Spodek (2007b) further defined social development as "... the process by [which] individuals develop the competencies needed to formally conduct themselves in conformity to social expectations" (p. ix). These two definitions formed the basis for the definition of social development used in this study; development is a process of growth occurring over time influenced through interactions with others.

Early relationship interactions influence the social development of children. Researchers have found good social skills lead to social acceptance at school (Feldhusen, Thurston, & Benning, 1970). Positive social interactions develop positive emotions, curiosity, coping skills, and close relationships (Tronick, 2008). Conversely, if a child lacks social competence by age six "...they have a high probability of being at risk throughout life" (McClellan & Katz, 1992, p. 2).

Social development in 3 and 4-year-olds focuses on the child being able to play well with other children, share toys, follow simple rules, show signs of independence, have imaginary friends, and be able to carry short conversations (Informed Parents-Successful Children, 2008; Papalia, Olds, & Feldmen, 2007; The Early Childhood Direction Center, 2012).

Family is one of the first influences on a child's social development. Saracho and Spodek (2007a) described social development as contextual. "...within the family environment, children begin to understand and build relationships and interactions among all the family members" (Saracho & Spodek, 2007a, p. 7). The emphasis was placed on parents. C. van Aken, Junger, Verhoeven, van Aken, and Dekovic (2007) commented "for young children, the quality of parenting is one of the most important components of their social environment" (p. 554). Baker (2013) examined the home literacy involvement of several African American and Caucasian families (N=5190). The findings supported that increased social emotional competence in preschool children was linked to frequent participation in home literacy activities (i.e. reading books and telling stories).

Susskind (2007) described parent-child interactions as central to the development of socialization and relationships. "Socialization, is not a unidirectional influence, where society simply affects the individual. Instead, relationships are perceived as bidirectional. That is, the parent affects the child's development, as well as the child impacting the parent's." (Susskind, 2007, p. 2). Thus, children learn how to interact with others through their interactions with their parents. Not only are early interactions

important, but interactions within families influence children's social development. "They [families] serve as models of what infants and children should expect in their future relationships" (Susskind, 2007, p. 2). Evidence suggests a child's early relationships impacts their future relationships with others within and outside the family. Kroll, Carson, Redshaw, and Quigley (2016) discovered father involvement with their children during preschool and early elementary years resulted in lower child behavior issues. Preschool teachers reported, children showed less internalizing behaviors problems when fathers were more involved in play (Dubeau, Coutu, & Lavigueur, 2013). A meta-analysis of the empirical literature from 1998-2008 (McWayne, Downer, Campos, & Harris, 2013) on father involvement and child outcomes for school readiness found "with respect to the qualitative elements of fathering, positive parenting behaviors were positively linked to children's cognitive/academic skills, prosocial skills, and self-regulation, again with the latter two comparisons being the strongest" (p. 911). Father involvement quality and quantity greatly impacted children's self-regulatory behaviors (McWayne, et al., 2013). Preschool children's externalizing and internalizing behaviors within a school setting decreased when the father's levels of play increased (Jia, Kotila, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2012). When coparenting relationships were supportive, "father involvement in play protects children from problem behaviors and facilitates children's social competence..." (Jia et al., 2012, p. 856). Thus, social development of a child in their early years impacts their relationships with others in later years.

Grusac and Davidov (2010) portray the interactions between parents and children as "...a complex process..." (p. 692). Fathers and mothers influence their children by

their own social characteristics and care-taking behaviors (Lamb, 2010). Parallels have been identified between 7-year-olds playing with their parents and a child's play with peers (Gerrits, Goudena, & van Aken, 2005) as "...mutual responsiveness, shared positive emotions and balance of control..." (p. 239). Understanding how children's interactions with parents correlate with later interactions with peers, demonstrated the importance of studying interactions between young children and SAHFs.

### **Father Involvement**

Father involvement as a construct has been described in many ways. Lamb explained it best "one problem is that the implicit definitions of parental involvement often vary from study to study, with different activities being included in the operational definitions of paternal involvement, making comparisons difficult at best" (2000, p. 30-31).

Father involvement encompasses three behaviors: interaction, availability, and responsibility. Interactions is the direct contact through shared activities (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985). "Interaction" was replaced with "engagement" by Lamb in 1987 (as cited in Pleck, 2010). Later, Pleck (2010) replaced "engagement" with "positive engagement activities" due to research focusing on parenting styles (Pleck, 2010, 2012). Pleck (2010) noted "interaction" and "engagement" have been used interchangeable within the literature. Availability is the physical distance the father is from the child (Lamb et al., 1985). Availability has also been termed as 'accessibility' (Pleck, 2012). Responsibility refers to the father taking care of the child's physical or emotional needs (Lamb et al., 1985). Lamb (2000) elaborated on the "responsibility" definition as "...the

extent to which the parent takes ultimate responsibility for the child's welfare and care" (p. 31).

Pleck in 2010 (as cited in Pleck, 2012) redefined the construct of involvement as "... (1) positive engagement activities, (2) warmth and responsiveness, and (3) control" (p.245). Pleck added to the responsibility construct of involvement stating "... (4) social and material indirect care, activities that parents do *for* the child but not *with* the child; and (5) process responsibility, ensuring that the four prior components are provided" (as cited in Pleck, 2012, p. 245). These changes have moved the foci of involvement from time to "... positive engagement activities, warmth/responsiveness, and control" (Pleck, 2012, p. 248).

Even though the definition of father involvement was expanded, for the purposes of this study, interactions were defined as fathers' "... direct contact with his child, through caretaking and shared activities" (Lamb et al., 1985, p. 884).

Ashbourne, Daly, and Brown (2011) studied "... fathers' experience of their children's influence and their own response..." (p. 71) through a qualitative study in Canada. Some fathers described their interactions with their children like singing to decrease negative behaviors, wrestling, and creating games to play with their children. The majority fathers interacted through conversations, spending time with their children and play. Fathers of infants reported hugging and holding their infants (Ashbourne et al., 2011). Furthermore, play was indicated as a way fathers were involved with their children (Ashbourne et al., 2011).

## **Attachment**

Father attachment is affected by father involvement. Brown, McBride, Shin, and Bost (2007) studied "... fathers' parenting quality and father involvement to father-child attachment" (p.198). Brown et al., (2007) linked father-child attachment to father involvement. Children in the study were between 2 and 3-years-old and enrolled in a daycare or preschool program. Data for the Brown et al. (2007) study was collected through self-reports, time-diaries, interviews, and observations in the home and laboratory setting. The findings suggested neither gender nor age made a difference in attachment security. Brown et al., (2007) found father involvement had a negative effect on father-child attachment/relationship when the father was considered intrusive, scored low on positive affect, scored low on task orientation, or when the fathers' parenting was less desirable. Essentially, "...the degree to which father involvement accrues benefits for father-child attachment is dependent upon fathers' parenting quality" (Brown et al., 2007, p. 212). Similarly, Bureau, Martin, Yurkowski, Schmiedel, Quan, Moss, Deneault, and Pallanca (2017) found no differences in child-father attachment security associated with the child's gender or age. Higher parenting stress resulted in higher insecure attachment rates between the child and father. Higher insecure attachment rates led to more conduct problems in preschool-aged children (Bureau et al., 2017). However, parental sensitivity lead to higher attachment security between the child and father (Bureau et al., 2017).

## **Child's Age Differences**

Father involvement of preschool and school-aged children differed by age (Marsiglio, 1991). Though fathers of preschool and school-aged children interacted with their children through play, typically on a daily basis (Marsiglio, 1991), fathers were more involved in physical activities, outdoor and sports activities with their 3 to 5-year-old children than older aged children (Child Trends, 2002). Fathers tended to show warmth towards their infant child by holding, tickling, or physically caring for their child, such as changing diapers (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, Horowitz, & Kinukawa, 2008). Paquette, Carbonneau, Dubeau, Bigras, and Tremblay (2003), found fathers tended to engage in rough-and-tumble play more often with their children when they were under two years of age. Conversely, Ivrendi and Isikoglu (2010) did not find a difference in father-child play based on children's ages. However, Anderson, Roggman, Innocenti, and Cook (2013) using the Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLA-D) found father-child play at age two, had a significant impact on child outcomes. The authors indicate a need to study which type of outcomes, developmental, emotional, etc., father-child play impacts the most (Anderson et al., 2013).

Schoppe-Sullivan, Kotila, Jia, Lang, and Bower (2013) found fathers were involved with socialization engagement with their child more often when the child was "earlier-born" (p. 511). Kuo, Volling, & Gonzalez (2017) researched fathers' involvement with their first-born child after the birth of a second child. Generally, father's involvement was higher with the first-born child within the first month after birth of the second child. However, after the first month, involvement with the second child



increased while involvement with the first-born child decreased (Kuo et al., 2017).

Similarity, Gaertner, Spinrad, Eisenberg, and Greving (2007) found as the infant aged, fathers increased their involvement in the area of teaching. However, the more children fathers had, the less involved they were with their infant.

### **Cognitive Development**

Father involvement affects a child's school readiness. Fathers who read to their children and who had "positive control behaviors" had children with a higher language acquisition over time. However, too high of "positive control behaviors" and general play did not indicate a change in language skills by the child (Fagan et al., 2016).

However, the research on father involvement with cognitively stimulating activities such as reading, story-telling, or singing songs produced differing results by age. Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2008) and McGill (2014) found fathers of infants were not as involved in cognitively stimulating activities. Conversely, Baker (2013) found fathers' involvement in home literacy interactions influenced the social emotional development of their children. Planalp and Braungart-Rieker (2016) studied father involvement from longitudinal data with children at ages 9 months, 2 years and 4 years. In their study, father's play such as storytelling and reading books, and caregiving increased as the child aged. Marsiglio (1991) noted that fathers of preschool-aged children did not take their children to places outside the home nor read to their children. However, once their children reached school age, they helped them with their projects. Conversely, in Bulanda's (2004), study of children age eight and older, the father's involvement decreased as the child aged. Differences in father involvement by their child's age may

refer to the differences Susskind (2007) alluded to with the social development of a child being influenced by cognitive and physical growth. Similarly, taking care of the child's physical and emotional needs were what Lamb et al. (1985) would describe as responsibility involvement.

### **School Involvement**

Lau (2016) studied father involvement during the preschool years. Father involvement was not correlated with school readiness but by family income and education of parents. Involved fathers described attending seminars and organizing activities at their children's preschool. Fathers indicated participating in their child's preschool helped them to know their child better and increased their parenting skills (Lau, 2016).

Father involvement was found to influence children's learning and motivation at school. Teachers believed fathers impacted the psychological well-being of the child and helped enhance the child's learning when involved at the preschool (Lau, 2016). Teachers discussed how children talked about their fathers and were more motivated to participate in school when the parents were involved (Lau, 2016).

### **Child's Gender Differences**

Gender differences can influence father-child interactions. Garcia (2014) found "fathers who had sons spent more time in child care activities than fathers without sons" (p. 147). In a similar study, Planalp and Braungart-Rieker (2016) found fathers tended to be more involved with their sons, at a younger age. Brown, Kogan, and Kim (2016) studied generational African American father involvement and relational schemas. The

authors found fathers were more involved with their sons than their daughters with the difference found in relational schema based on gender (Brown et al., 2016).

In studying father ideology with a data sample from the 1980's Bulanda (2004), noted fathers tended to be more involved in "greater breadth" (p. 43) activities such as talking, when they had a son. Fathers tended to care for a boy more than a girl, when the father cared for a child by himself (Kroll et al., 2016). Fathers spent more time in achievement-related activities with their sons than their daughters (McGill, 2014).

Father involvement can influence behaviors and development of emotional skills in boys. Using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, Baker (2017) examined father involvement influences upon boys at 24-months of age compared to specific behaviors at 48-months. When fathers had more warmth, their son's negative behaviors were lower. "Father warmth and home learning stimulation also predicted better social emotional skills" (Baker, 2017, p. 2343). However, fathers supported their daughter's emotionally more than their son's emotionality (Jeynes, 2016).

In the Torres, Veríssimo, Monteiro, MPsychClin, and Santos (2014) study on parental involvement of daycare preschool-aged children, girls had higher social competence while boys had higher anger-aggression. Although, father involvement in leisure outdoor activities with their children resulted in "higher social competence and lower anger-aggression" (p. 196) behaviors in children of both genders but especially boys (Torres et al., 2014). With indoor play and father involvement, children had higher anger-aggression and lower social competence (Torres et al., 2014). Indoor play was negatively associated with daughter's social competence (Torres et al., 2014).

St. George, Fletcher, and Palazzi (2016) identified differences in father involvement of toy play and physical play based on the child's gender. Studying toy play in a controlled environment, St. George et al. (2016) observed daughters connected and engaged with their fathers more than sons. In the area of physical play, no differences were found in father-child interactions by child gender (St. George et al., 2016).

Conversely, Flanders, Leo, Paquette, Pihl, and Seguin (2009) and Paquette et al. (2003) found fathers partook in rough-and-tumble play more with sons than daughters. Boys who partook in more rough-and-tumble play at a later age were more aggressive at school. When studying dominance levels of fathers in play with their 2 to 6 year-old children, in Quebec, Flanders et al. (2009) found children with a more dominant father in rough-and-tumble play tended to be less aggressive. However, the opposite was true for children who had less dominant fathers in rough-and-tumble play (Flanders et al., 2009). Children, in the Flanders et al. study who were more aggressive, were older and partook in more rough-and-tumble play, confirming Paquette et al.'s (2003) findings. A child tends to be less aggressive when the father spends more time with the child (Flanders et al., 2009).

Fathers participated in socio-dramatic and physical play more with their sons than their daughters (Ivrendi & Isikoglu, 2010). Fathers participated in more active physical play and bedtime readiness with boys than girls and partook in more musical play with their preschool girls than boys (Kroll et al., 2016).

In other studies, a child's gender did not impact the level or kind of father involve. With father involvement. Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2013) studied engagement of

mothers and fathers and found no differences based upon the child's gender. Bernier, Jarry-Boileau, and Lacharite (2014) completed a study in Canada on father-child play interactions with children at ages 15 and 18 months. No differences in interactions were found based on the gender of the child. Likewise, Lau (2016) discovered the child's gender had no effect on father involvement in the home or preschool environment. Halme, Åstedt-Kurki, and Tarkka (2009) also found no differences in father involvement based on children's gender. Some studies have found no difference in gender differences.

## **Play**

Generally fathers have been viewed as being more playful than mothers (e.g. Kokkinaki & Vasdekis, 2015). "Through play, fathers are enriching their children's development by teaching skills alongside promoting independence, strength, and physical ability" (Creighton, Brussoni, Oliffe, & Olsen 2015, p. 562). Creighton et al., (2015) studied working fathers in large urban, small urban, and rural settings in Canada. Fathers viewed outdoor play as important. In rural areas play was viewed as a way to help build life skills. "...fathers used play as a means to building relationship and spending time with children" (p. 576).

Fletcher, St. George, and Freeman (2013) conducted a pilot study on rough-and-tumble play between fathers and their 4-year old children. They found rough-and-tumble play made an impact on children's psychological development in which the quality of play had a negative correlation on the child's peer, emotional, and conduct problems.

Play has positive impacts on a child's social skill development. "Parental monitoring of play inter-actions is integral to the development of adaptive social skills, as parents correct socially unacceptable behaviors and help children navigate conflicts. Parents also model social skills in their own relationships" (Luecken, Roubinov, & Tanaka 2013, p. 172). Through play with their fathers, children learn social skills.

### **Role Identity and Parenting Attitudes**

Rane and McBride (2000) examined the influence of role identity in working fathers and their level and type of interactions with their 3 to 5-year-old children. How a father self-identified his roles influenced his interactions with his children. Fathers who identified with a fathering role more than a work role were more nurturing and involved with their children. Fathers who identified as being nurturing tended to spend more time interacting with their children on workdays. Planalp and Braungart-Rieker (2016) discovered fathers who identified more with a fathering role increased in their play and caregiving over time compared to fathers who identified with a working role. Similarly, Creighton et al. (2015) found working fathers in Canada identified themselves more as a provider and disciplinarian for their children.

How fathers view their role results in positive outcomes for a child's behavior. Opondo, Redshaw, Savage-McGlynn, and Quigley (2016) studied fathers who identified with a positive emotional response and security in their parenting role when their infants were 8 weeks and 8 months. The result was a positive outcome effect on their child's behaviors at ages 9 and 11 years. Interestingly, father involvement differences based on

the child's gender or father involvement in household tasks did not have an impact on their child's behavior difficulty at ages 9 and 11 years (Opondo et al., 2016).

Traditional versus non-traditional fathering attitudes affect father involvement. Fathers whose attitude was non-traditional tended to be more involved than fathers who had more traditional father attitudes (McGill, 2014). Fathering attitudes affected the amount of play, physical care, and achievement-related activities fathers partook in with their children (McGill, 2014). Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2013) found fathers with non-traditional beliefs tended to engage in more didactic and caregiving roles with their preschool-aged children. The caregiving role was especially evident with fathers holding non-traditional beliefs who had sons (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013).

A father's views of father involvement affected involvement time with their children. Halme et al. (2009) completed a study in Finland on residential and divorced fathers' involvement with their 3 to 6-year-old children. The father's view of father involvement affected the amount of active involvement and accessibility the father had to his children. Active involvement included playing, reading, outdoor activities, cuddling, and other child-care duties like feeding and bathing. Fathers spent 1 hour on the weekdays and 3 hours on the weekends in active involvement with their children. In general, fathers spent 4.5 hours on the weekdays and 12 hours on the weekends in accessible and available involvement for their preschool-aged children. Halme et al. (2009) reported divorced fathers and fathers not residing with their children spent more time in active involvement with their children than married fathers. Divorced fathers who had joint custody of the preschool-aged children "... were the most committed to

the lives of their children...” (Halme et al., 2009, p. 115). Halme et al. (2009) stated “in traditional families, fathers spent less time with their children and did not rate interaction as important as did fathers of non-traditional families” (p. 115).

The findings of the Halme et al. (2009) study were contradicted by Jones and Mosher (2013) who used the National Survey of Family Growth data to investigate involvement of residential and non-residential fathers with children under the age of five, in areas of eating, playing, providing care, and reading. Fathers who resided with their children tended to be more involved than nonresidential fathers (Jones & Mosher, 2013). Every day or several times a week, 96% residential fathers ate with their children, 98% played with their children, 90% cared for care-giving needs, and 60% read with their children when their children were under 5-years-old (Jones & Mosher, 2013).

Father beliefs and self-efficacy effected father involvement, especially with play. Freeman, Newland, and Coyl (2008) studied father involvement of children in Early Head Start and Head Start. Fathers partook in physical play, such as playing outdoors or playing with blocks, more often than didactic play, like singing songs and reading books. Additionally, fathers more readily engaged in caregiving activities such as bathing or playing with the child, more often than socialization activities like taking the child to a birthday party, library, or the dentist (Freeman et al., 2008). Self-efficacy, role-construction, and fathering beliefs had positive impact on father involvement; however, father responsibility had a weak correlation with father involvement (Freeman et al., 2008). Additionally, it was found fathers’ ages and risk factors negatively affected father involvement (Freeman et al., 2008).



Gender ideology affected father involvement. Bulanda (2004) studied traditional and egalitarian gender ideologies on fathers. It was found fathers who had an egalitarian viewpoint meaning the responsibilities of parenting are shared equally by both parents, were more involved with their children. A father's involvement with his child, may be influenced by the way a father identifies his fathering role, the age and/or gender of the child, type of shared activities, economic outcomes, and family influences.

### **Work Influences**

Work times and income influenced father involvement. Carlson, VanOrman, and Turner (2017) studied resident and non-resident father's income with child involvement. Involvement included activities such as play, reading, and singing, based on the child's ages. Data was collected when the children were 1, 3, 5, and 9 years. For non-resident fathers, involvement increased with a higher income. However, involvement decreased for resident fathers when they worked more hours or had a higher income. Bulanda (2004) noted a similar finding when studying gender ideology and "breadth" (p. 43) of involvement. The father's age and hours worked typically led to less involvement by the father. Contrarily, McGill (2014) studied father involvement and fathering attitudes and found the amount of hours a father worked did not influence involvement with his children. Fathers who did not work tended to spend more time in physical care of their children.

Lau (2016) studied father involvement in two contexts, the home and preschool setting. The families in the study lived in Hong Kong. The children studied were 3 to 6 years of age. Lau found maternal employment and paternal employment had a

significant effect on father's involvement with his children in the home. If the mother worked or if the father worked part-time, in-home father involvement was higher (Lau, 2016). Fathers were involved through play, feeding, and bathing their children, reading to their children and supervising homework.

Kuo et al. (2017) noted fathers in single-earner households decreased their childcare involvement tasks such as changing diapers, etc., after the first month of the birth of their second child. Whereas, Weinshenker (2016) found fathers of nonstandard employment showed no differences with how often they played with their children. Economic recessions influenced father involvement. Knop and Brewster (2016) reported an increase in father involvement with preschool-aged children during the recession of 2006 to 2010 in the areas of play, bathing, and feeding.

Mother's employment time made a difference in father involvement time. Raley, Bianchi, and Wang (2012) used time diary data from the American Time Use Survey 2003-2007 to analyze father involvement compared to mother's work hours. The activities analyzed included physical care activities, recreational activities such as playing, arts and crafts, and managerial activities. Solo care provided by the father increased if the mother worked outside the home. The father's participating in the most solo care were those whose wife earned the family income and the father was unemployed. Managerial care by the father increased as the wives' employment hours increased. Interestingly, Raley et al. (2012) found all mothers, even those whose husbands were not employed, participated in more childcare time than fathers. In a similar finding by Garcia (2014) fathers were more involved in physical care with their

children when the mother was employed. Additionally, father care was more readily seen when the child was under 2 years of age.

In the Torres et al. (2014) study of parent involvement with preschool-aged Portuguese children. Fathers were found to be more involved in direct care such as teaching, discipline, play, and leisure outdoor activities when the mother was employed full or part-time.

### **Father's Education**

Cabrera, Hofferth, and Chae (2011) compared fathers who completed college with fathers whose education was limited to a high school diploma. The fathers with a college education read, sang songs and participated in verbally stimulating activities with their infants more than fathers who completed high school. Similarly, Garcia (2014) pointed out that fathers, in Spain, who college tended to partake in more teaching activities with their younger children. Education level impacted the amount of time the father spent taking physical care of his children especially when their children were under 2 years of age. However, Ivrendi and Isikoglu (2010) in a Turkish study, did not find a difference in father education level and play with preschool and elementary-aged children.

### **Family Interactions**

Father involvement influenced family interactions. Simonelli, Parolin, Sacchi, De Palo, and Vieno (2016) studied father involvement, marital satisfaction and family interactions. The authors used several different measures, one being a father involvement questionnaire. Data was taken at 7 months into pregnancy, 4, 9, and 18 months of age of

the child and again at preschool age between 36 and 48 months. One assessment was a triadic play situation in which each parent independently and together played with the child (or doll during prenatal data collection) and the child played independently throughout the duration of the observation. The father involvement questionnaire was given to fathers and mothers at each age range. Questions regarding daily childcare activities such as bathing and feeding changed with the age of the child. Simonelli et al. (2016) found father involvement within the participants they sampled was steady over the time period of data collection. Additionally, higher levels of father involvement “...corresponded to better interactive competences of the family during the triadic play situation” (Simonelli et al., 2016, p. 8).

John, Halliburton, and Humphrey (2013) studied mother-child and father-child play interaction patterns with typically developing and developmentally delayed preschool children. Parents were provided with toys and activities to interact with their children in the home for a set amount of time per session. Interactions were coded using the “Social Events System (Harrist & Pettit, 2000)” (John et al., 2013, p. 486), meaning each interaction was coded based on a goal. Specific interactions were coded as a whole interaction such as a parent coloring with their child during the entire observation time (John et al., 2013). The results indicated “fathers mostly engaged in proximal/physical play, let the child lead the interaction, behaved like age-mates, and challenged their child during play interactions” (John et al., 2013, p. 488). “Behaved like age-mates” referred to fathers “silly comments” and “challenged child during play” referred to fathers motivating and scaffolding their child in the play task (John et al., 2013). Mothers were

found to have “...structure, teach, guide behavior, and engage in empathic/reflective conversation” (p. 488) and tended to ask questions (John et al., 2013).

Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2013) studied two-parent families of preschool-aged children comparing engagement of mothers and fathers. Engagement areas tested were: socialization, didactic play, caregiving, and physical play. The findings suggested fathers were more often involved in didactic play, caregiving, and physical play. Mothers were more involved with caregiving engagement. When mothers worked, they were less involved in socialization and caregiving engagement with their children.

The quality of couple relationships is correlated with an increased value of father involvement (McClain & Brown, 2017). Fathers had higher relationship quality with the mothers when they were more involved with child care. Yet, when only the mother worked full-time, McClain and Brown (2017) found “fathers reported lower levels of relationship quality” (p. 340) between the father and mother.

Marital satisfaction influenced father involvement. Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2013) studied engagement of two-parent families with preschoolers. When the parents had a higher level of relationship satisfaction, the father tended to be more involved in socialization engagement with their child (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013).

Father involvement was described as the interactions of a father and child through direct contact and shared activities (Lamb et al., 1985). A father’s involvement with his child, may be influenced by the way a father identifies his fathering role, the age and/or gender of the child, type of shared activities, and economic outcomes.

## **Stay-At-Home Fathers**

Chesley and Flood (2017) compared SAHFs to stay-at-home mothers (SAHMs) using American Time Use Survey “nationally representative time study data” (p. 516). They found SAHFs were twice as likely to look for work or were employed than SAHMs. Surprisingly, Chesley and Flood (2017) reported more SAHFs were retired than SAHMs. SAHFs tended to care for older children than SAHMs. SAHMs spent more time in child-care time than SAHFs. The Pew Research Center reported SAHFs provided an average of 11 hours of childcare per week (Parker & Wang, 2013).

SAHFs see their role as more than babysitting (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008). They take the responsibility of parenting seriously. SAHFs place an emphasis on the importance of their child learning social skills. They value their children learning good social skills. “The fathers in our study emphasized warmth and emotional support as much as limit-setting and teaching children rules for social interactions” (Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008, p. 203).

SAHFs desired for their children to be treated as an adult, have independence, and “...engage in gender socialization that did not come from stereotypical gender roles” (Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008, p. 201). SAHFs expressed a need to allow their children to be independent, such as playing by themselves, and being risk-takers (Doucet & Merla, 2007).

SAHFs engage in play with their children (Doucet, 2006; Stevens, 2015) such as outdoor physical play or children climbing on them. SAHFs also engaged in activities with their children by taking interest in athletic or sports activities, teaching children to

swim and ride a bike (Doucet & Merla, 2007), or playing sports and coaching soccer (Stevens, 2015).

Shared activities between fathers and children also occurred outside the home. SAHFs attended playgroups and took field-trips with their children (Doucet, 2006), spent time in a store, such as going to a pet store (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013) and taking a child to the park (Stevens, 2015).

Interactions between SAHFs and children included physical touch and emotional connection (Doucet, 2006; Doucet & Merla, 2007; Solomon, 2014b). Solomon (2014b) noting “engaged fathering” (p. 51) found SAHFs showed “...gentle physical affection, emotional intimacy, shared leisure and being in tune with their children’s emotional needs” (p. 61). Narratives described by Solomon’s participants include physical contact (i.e. holding hands) and emotional contact (i.e. talking together). The emotional and physical touch interactions between fathers and their children fits within Lamb et al.’s (1985) responsibility component of father involvement.

How a father responded to his families’ needs influenced his involvement with his children (Matta & Kundson-Martin, 2006). As Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) found working fathers and SAHFs with high responsivity (how well the father responded to the needs of his children and wife) were considered to be more involved with their children than fathers who had lower responsivity.

Differences in SAHFs who are by choice and those who are by circumstance was studied based on gender ideology. Kramer and Kramer (2016) noted differences in gender ideology in “caregiving SAHFs” (p. 1316) who stay-at-home by choice, versus

“unable-to-work SAHFs” (p. 1316) those who stay-at-home due to illness, disability, or unemployment. A “caregiving SAHF” was more likely to have a higher egalitarian gender ideology. The “caregiving SAHFs” tended to have a higher income, higher education levels, and younger aged children to care for, than “unable-to-work SAHFs” (Kramer & Kramer, 2016).

Spending time with their children and building relationships was an important factor for SAHFs. Studying SAHF’s masculine identities Lee and Lee (2016) found SAHFs believed their relationships with their children were stronger, building trust and intimacy due to staying home. The participants expressed joy to view their children’s growth and milestones by being at home (Lee & Lee, 2016). Additionally, the SAHFs were pleased to spend more time with their children (Lee & Lee, 2016).

The literature reviewed provides the foundation for a closer examination of interactions between SAHFs and their children. More specifically, this study examined the social interactions between SAHFs and their preschool-aged children.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the interactions between SAHFs and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children.

The primary focus for this study was interactions between the SAHFs and their children, however, a secondary focus of the study explored the availability and responsibility of SAHFs with their children.

#### **Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What types of interactions occur between SAHFs with their 2.5 to 4-year-old children?
2. What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?

#### **Methods**

In this study, a naturalistic case study methodology was used consisting of SAHF-child dyad units. Each father-child dyad was considered one case (Stake, 1995). Case studies enables in-depth understanding about the interactions and context of the case through observations, context descriptions, interviews, and document review data (Stake, 1995). The use of multiple data sources were used to support the understanding of interactions between SAHFs and their preschool children. Through observations, the interactions of SAHFs with their children were interpreted and “why” and “how” SAHFs interact with their children was proved. Semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall

interviews were used to collect data from SAHFs and interpretative analysis was used to analyze these interactions.

### **Participants**

Participants were SAHFs and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children. The SAHF must have met the following criteria for participation (a) be a male (b) the primary caretaker of a 2.5 to 4-year-old child during the child's waking hours, (c) have been in this role of primary caretaker for at least one year, and (d) is the caretaker by choice. Marital and employment status was not a defining factor. The definition of a SAHF for the purposes of this study differs from that used by the U. S. Census Bureau (2012) in that SAHFs who work or were not married were considered eligible for participation.

Two and a half-year-old to four-year-old children were the focus for this study given their cognitive and developmental stage. At this age, children tend to require less direct attention and supervision from their caretakers, thus allowing the researcher to view different types of parent-child interactions, including independent play. In addition, children between 2.5 and 4-years-old may not have been as distracted as younger children by the researcher during observations.

### **The Human Instrument**

The human instrument was the primary analytical tool used in this study, namely, the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As stated by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) "the human instrument allows data to be collected and analyzed in an interactive process" (p. 39). In this study, the interactive process was investigated through SAHF interviews and observations of father-child dyads.

## **Procedures**

After obtaining approval from Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board, participants were selected through criterion sampling. Criterion sampling ensures each case meets a set criteria to increase quality assurance of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants were recruited through public places such as libraries, churches, YMCAs, gymnastics, preschools, etc. by posting of flyers. Other organizations were emailed and asked to post the study information on their website or to distribute it to anyone they thought may be interested. Monitors of social networking sites for SAHFs, dads, parenting, and family groups found on Facebook and Meet-Up were also asked to post the information for the study. Approximately 55 to 60 flyers were posted on social media, inside local businesses or sent by email. Potential participants were asked to contact the researcher by email or phone. Upon contact, the researcher screened the participants through phone or email to determine if they met criteria for participation. Participants had to meet the following criteria (a) be a male (b) the primary caretaker of a 2.5 or 4-year-old child during the child's waking hours, (c) have been in the role as the primary caretaker for at least one year, and (d) be the caretaker by choice (in other words, not due to job loss).

Once potential participants were screened for meeting the above criteria, data collection began. Seven potential participants contacted the researcher. Of the seven potential participants, five completed the screening. The other two potential participants gave no response after being contacted multiple times to complete the screening questionnaire. Of the five potential participants who completed the screening, one did

not meet the selected criteria and two gave no response after multiple attempts to schedule the initial interview. Therefore, a total of two participants participated in this study.

Prior to the initial interview, the consent process was followed with both participants. Questions about the design and procedures of the study were addressed before initiating the initial interview. Fathers selected for participation received their choice of a \$30.00 gift card to either Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Chili's, or Logan's. The gift card was mailed to participants, along with a thank you note after the second stimulated recall interview.

In this study, a naturalistic case study methodology was used with SAHF-child dyads as the unit of analysis. Case studies enable in-depth understanding about the interactions and context of the case under study (Stake, 1995). In this study, each father-child dyad was considered one case. In case study methodology, observations, context descriptions, interviews, and document review data are collected by the researcher (Stake, 1995). The use of multiple data sources were used to support the understanding of interactions between SAHFs and their preschool children. Through observations, the interactions of SAHFs with their children were interpreted and “why” and “how” SAHFs interacted with their children was probed. Through semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall interviews with SAHFs, interpretative analysis was used to analyze these interactions.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection for each father-child dyad consisted of (a) one initial interview, (b) two observations, (c) two semi-structured stimulated recall interviews (one following each observation), (d) field notes, and (e) artifacts provided by the SAHFs during observations or interviews. The researcher followed up with participants over the phone or email, as preferred by the participant, with questions for clarification during the data analysis process.

### **Initial Interview**

An initial semi-structured interview, lasting approximately one hour, was conducted with each SAHF. Semi-structured interviews were guided by pre-written interview questions that changed during the interview depending upon the dialogue between interviewee and interviewer (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988 as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993). In this study, questions changed as themes emerged during data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Questions for the initial interview are found in Appendix A. Each initial interview and each stimulated recall interview was recorded through detailed hand-written notes taken by the researcher. Interviews occurred when the child was otherwise occupied.

### **Observations**

Researchers gain a better understanding of the complexity and uniqueness of a case through observations (Stake, 1995). Following each initial interview, two observations of each father-child dyad took place. Each observation occurred in a familiar setting for the dyad, chosen by the SAHF, and lasted approximately one hour.

SAHFs were asked to interact with their child normally and to continue to engage in the activities that usually happened in the chosen setting.

Non-participant observations occurred, meaning the researcher did not interact with the participants during the observation. Using this technique “the researcher is an outsider of the group under study,...[and] record[s] data without direct involvement with activity or people” (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). For example, if the participants were playing a board game, the researcher did not join the game. However, participants chose to talk frequently to the researcher during the observations. Out of politeness, the researcher either nodded or gave a limited response. Within 24 hours following each observation, the researcher compiled notes regarding what was observed. Stimulated recall interviews were conducted through the use of sample questions/phrases found in Appendix B.

### **Simulated Recall Interviews**

Stimulated recall was selected as a technique to aid in understanding SAHFs’ perspectives on interacting with their child. Bloom (1953) termed stimulated recall as a circumstance in which “...a subject may be enabled to relive an original situation with vividness and accuracy if he is presented with a large number of the cues or stimuli which occurred during the original situation” (p. 161). Stimulated recall was used by Stough (2001) with teachers who reflected upon their feelings and actions within the classroom. Stimulated recall interview procedures were similarly used in this study to provide data on how and why SAHFs interacted with their children.

The stimulated recall interviews consisted of questions designed to stimulate

SAHFs reflection upon both their interactions and non-interactions during the observations. Within 48 hours of observations of each father-child dyad, a stimulated recall interview took place with the SAHF and lasted approximately one hour. The stimulated recall interview took place while the child was otherwise occupied. All procedures were recorded with detailed hand-written notes taken by the researcher. At the end of each stimulated recall interviews, transcripts and field notes were transcribed for data analysis. Follow-up questions for clarification of transcripts were sent to the SAHF by phone or email.

### **Field Notes**

Field notes consisted of technical notes taken during and following interviews, observations, and data analysis. Stake (1995) stresses the need to write after an observation and record the "...key ideas and episodes captured" (p. 66) and following an interview. Field notes included observations on body language, environmental notes, thoughts relating to interviews and observations, and notes on the data analysis process. Within 72 hours, observational field notes were transcribed for data analysis by the researcher.

### **Artifacts**

In addition, artifacts such as documents, drawings, pictures, websites, media, emails, or texts SAHFs shared with the researcher were recorded. Creswell (2013) discusses the importance of collecting various sources of data to add to the study while Stake (1995) indicates the need to review documents to add to the observational data collected by the researcher.

## **Reflexive Journaling**

Reflexive journaling includes recording one's thoughts, values, biases, philosophical assumptions, actions, and decisions for the study (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexive journaling was used (a) within 24 hours of interviews and observations, (b) throughout data analysis after interacting with the data, and (c) at any point in time when the researcher's thoughts needed to be written down for processing of the study. Creswell calls for researchers to add their reflections about the phenomena being studied as part of the study (2013). Creswell (2013) reasoned how adding one's reflections may reduce bias that may interfere with how one "...may potentially have shaped the findings, the conclusions, and the interpretations drawn in a study" (p. 216).

## **Analysis of Data**

Data analysis consisted of breaking apart the researcher's impressions and observations and then making sense of the data through interpretation (Stake, 1995). Data analysis occurred simultaneously along with the data collection process. Data analysis began with unitizing the data, or breaking the data into units, the smallest piece of stand-alone information from the data with meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A unit may be a short phrase or a few words that, together, have meaning. Patterns between units were examined to draw meaning from the cases (Creswell, 2013). In this study, units were compiled on note cards for the first two rounds of analysis then input to Microsoft Excel for the final two rounds of analysis.

From these patterns, themes developed from the units by use of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparison method compares



collected data to emerging or existing themes. This process searches for similarity of units or new themes when none similar are found. To fully analyze data, units were compared multiple times after each new transcribed data set was added. Once the data was transcribed, units were identified after which constant comparison began within the transcribed data set. This process continued as each new transcription was added to the collected data. Units were compared until each belonged to a “look/feel-like” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 348) pile. These similarities were used to create specific themes that emerged from the data for each case. Units not fitting within existing themes were placed in a miscellaneous pile, following procedures outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Once data transcription ceased and units were placed into piles, units were evaluated to ensure they fit within the prescribed theme. Themes were analyzed as a whole and for relationship to other themes. At this stage in analysis, themes were combined and condensed together (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, two or more themes may fit within each other as one theme or one theme may closely relate to another theme and form a sub-theme. Explanations of these relationships and determining similarities and differences between themes shaped the writing of the case study narrative.

During and following data analysis, the report of the study was written with thick description to provide detailed information of the study’s context for the purpose of transferability from one study to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to the validation process of data which are collected within a qualitative study. Specific techniques used within this study, regarded as important for qualitative research validation, included persistent observation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Overall, trustworthiness ensures the audience hears the voice of the participants through the researcher.

**Persistent observation.** Persistent observation refers to the researcher looking for depth of relevancy of details within the context being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent observation requires the researcher to be in the field long enough to determine which actions are or are not part of the phenomenon and the relevancy of the actions being studied (Creswell, 2013). For this study, persistent observation was facilitated through the use of one initial interview, two observations, two stimulated recall interviews, and archival data from each father-child dyad.

**Member checking.** Member checks increase researcher accuracy through confirming interview and observation summarizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), thus adding to data validation (Creswell, 2013), and triangulation (Stake, 1995). Within this study, questions for clarity were asked during interviews when needed. Also, following completion of each interview or observation, the researcher provided a verbal summary statement for participants to confirm. Summary statements allow the researcher to check perceptions and interpretations; in response to the summary statement, the participant may confirm, correct, or add to the summary statement.

After transcription was completed on all interviews and stimulated recall

interviews, transcripts were emailed to participants to check for clarity of transcriptions. Participants were asked to add to or clarify points the researcher may have missed. After compilation of each case, participants were emailed their case to check for validity. Only one participant responded to both email checks. These member checking techniques increased the accuracy of the data collection and data analysis.

**Peer debriefing.** Peer debriefing took place with a colleague who had experience in qualitative research. A peer debriefer is a person who listens, discusses, and offers suggestions to the researcher but is not invested in the study (Creswell, 2013; Erlandson et al., 1993). A peer debriefer aids in alleviating researcher bias and opinions by allowing for processing of thoughts with another person. As Creswell states, while referring to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the peer debriefer "...keeps the researcher honest..." (p. 251), thereby, adding credibility (Erlandson et al., 1993) to the study. For this study, the peer debriefer was consulted as needed typically on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Consultation occurred (a) when the researcher had questions in which the peer debriefer could give insight, (b) to discuss the progress of the study with the researcher, or (c) to give researcher insight or answer questions related to data analysis.

### **Transferability and Credibility of the Study**

While this study gives new insight to interactions of SAHFs and their children, it should not be considered generalizable to SAHFs as a population. However, through the use of thick description, detailed information of the study's context, are provided for transferability purposes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to thick description and what is learned from one study being applied to another study (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985) possibly within the same context. An increased possibility of transferability occurred through the use of multiple techniques for data collection such as interviews, observations, field notes, etc. and through the use of multiple techniques of data analysis such as member checking, thick description, etc.

In qualitative research, the human instrument is the tool for data collection, however past experiences, perceptions, and interpretations influence the researcher. As suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), trustworthiness techniques such as peer debriefing, member checks, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation may help increase credibility of the study. Another issue in using the human instrument is credibility of data collection (Erlandson et al., 1993). For example, with the human instrument, the researcher may hear or perceive behaviors differently than what was intended by the participant, which could affect the accuracy of data collection and thus the credibility of the study. Researcher field notes and member checks were used within this study to increase researcher credibility.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### **Case Study One: Dan and Lou**

##### **Design of the Case Study**

The focus of this case study was on Dan, a middle-aged man and Lou, his 3-year-old daughter. An initial interview conducted with Dan lasted an hour and a half. The first observation occurred a week after the initial interview at Dan and Lou's house. A week later, the second observation occurred at an indoor play facility. Observations lasted approximately an hour each. Stimulated recall interviews took place within 48 hours of each observation and lasted approximately an hour. Lou was present for both observations and the stimulated recall interview 1. Field notes were recorded within 24 hours and transcripts transcribed within 72 hours following interviews and observations. Transcripts resulted in 791 units of data. A reflexive journal was kept throughout recruiting, data collection, and data analysis.

##### **Introducing the Case**

Dan was a middle aged, Caucasian gentleman with peppered gray hair and dark-rimmed glasses. He was intelligent, straight-forward, and talkative; stating his views and opinions.

Dan was a SAHF for 13 years at the time of the initial interview. He explained his story of becoming a SAHF. In 2003 the company he worked for was going bankrupt and the airlines had thrown out union contracts. He knew he would be furloughed. Employees from the main company moved into jobs at his company. He knew once that

happened he would have less seniority. Dan decided to take 3 years of the unpaid Family Medical Leave Act. He explained “there were a number of factors, work, or economic situation somewhat. [A] dad has to make a choice; many SAHFs.” Then Tom was born, so Dan took leave to care for Tom. At about this time, the family decided to move. When Libby, his second child was born, Dan decided he could either reenter the work force or continue to stay home. Dan commented “[I] could have gone back to work but now just rooted in this [staying-at-home].” At his job he made about \$30,000 a year. “Enough to out-source raising a child. All income went to childcare” (Dan, initial interview). Dan decided to stay home and care for his children. “Which I like to” he had iterated. This was confirmed when Dan mentioned in the initial interview how he was the “bodyguard” and in the second stimulated recall interview how he was the “support system for the house.”

Dan had three children. The eldest, Tom, was 13-years-old, Libby was 10-years-old, and Lou was 3-years-old. Dan talked about all his children. However, the observations and focus of the interviews were on Lou. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, information regarding Tom and Libby was not added unless the information gave insight to interactions between Dan and Lou.

Dan expressed a joy of teaching. In the second stimulated recall interview, Dan stated

I am a flight instructor (CFI). I have taught for a long time and volunteered in schools for a long time. I think overall, I don't think a lot of what I am doing as I am doing it but I think it out beforehand. I study everything as if I had to teach it

because this is how you really learn. When you know it that you can teach it, then you really know it.

Additionally, he stated “I like to teach. Main goal: get exercise, learn something, have fun.”

Dan demonstrated a passion for nature and teaching his children about wildlife. In the initial interview, Dan discussed how he desired for his children to play outside and learn from nature. Dan said “[I am] a proponent of exercise and [be] active if you can be. [Children] can’t, won’t play outside anymore.” Dan taught his children about nature as evidenced through videoing wildlife in their backyard. During the initial interview, Dan showed me a video of a hawk he and his children watched in their backyard. Dan also expressed that play activities like playing with a balloon can be turned into science and physics lessons such as talking about jet propulsion.

Lou had shoulder length bouncing brown curls. She was calm, talkative, friendly, happy, and had abundant energy. Lou’s speech was well formed for a child her age. When Dan was preoccupied, Lou entertained herself by talking, singing, or playing pretend. However, Lou seemed to prefer spending time with Dan by moving closer to him when he entered the room. She attended a mother’s day out program three days a week and participated in Sportball.

Observation 1 occurred at Dan and Lou’s house. The majority of the observation was spent in the living room, breakfast nook, and kitchen. In the living room was an indoor basketball arcade game which Dan had mentioned in the initial interview.

Observation 2 occurred at a large one room, indoor play facility not far from Dan and Lou's house. The indoor play facility had a large maze, a ball pit, a mountain with a slide, and a large inflatable slide. A good summary of the indoor play facility, was when Dan said "which is what going to that place is all about, imaginative play" (stimulated recall interview 2). "[I] don't spend a lot of time thinking about what we are doing. Go play, have fun, fall down, laugh about it. That place is pretty safe."

### **Themes on Types of Interactions**

The following section describes emergent themes on the types of interactions between Dan and his daughter Lou. Each of the themes will be described with examples from the data.

**Teaching social skills.** Dan taught Lou social skills related to playing with other children. At an organized father's group event, Dan instructed Lou how to play with her peers. He reinforced Lou's social skills in patience and turn-taking in observation 2.

Dan explained in the initial interview how he and Lou attended SAHF events. He described Lou's interactions with her peers "now, she starts to interact with kids she doesn't know, to interact, play with them. Before Christmas, after school, kids would play. She would come up and say 'Dad, nobody wants to play with me.'" He responded to her with "why don't you do what they're doing? Their doing the same things." Dan commented how "she likes to run a lot." Dan continued "Lou, after Christmas turned. She wants to socialize more. First time on playground after Christmas all kids played and got along. Played together, talked a lot, imagination." He emphasized how "some younger smaller [children], some all play, were not interact[ing] as much. Now play with



others more.” He described how “can see stratification in young age [some children attend] private school, public school. She [Lou] doesn’t care about any of that [she will] play with anyone, everyone. That I try to encourage. How they behave; don’t hit people and call them names. We don’t cry if we want to race somebody and they win. They want to win also.”

A lesson in patience. During observation 2, Lou pointed to the tea cup spinners. All spinners were used. Dan told Lou “you will have to wait.” Instead, Lou walked off to another activity. When asked about his response to Lou “you will have to wait,” Dan replied “oh, oh, oh, yeah. She was on the spinner. I was gonna spin her and she got up to come over. [He had walked off] She came over to try to push me to go faster and other kids were faster and came over and got on. She should have stayed. It was a lesson in patience. I don’t dawdle too much getting to things I will do for her” (stimulated recall interview 2).

A teaching moment in observation 2 was when Lou stood at the top of the mountain slide not moving. A boy behind Lou waited for her to slide. Dan noticed Lou was not sliding. He called out “ready-set-go!” Lou mumbled something inaudible and did not slide. Dan made a teasing face to entice Lou to slide. He put his hands to his ears and wiggled his fingers while sticking out his tongue. Dan called out again “ready-set-go!” Lou still did not move. Dan called out “they are waiting. They are waiting. Look behind you. Do you want me to come up and push you?” Lou slid down the slide screaming as if she was having fun. When asked about his response saying “ready-set-go” and “they are waiting” Dan said “oh, yeah, there was, I want her to be aware that if

she is gonna get to the front of the line and people waiting, she can't just sit and ham and haw. She has to go or get out of the way."

**Communication.** The theme *communication* referred to Dan teaching Lou sign language and spelling. Dan asked Lou questions and had her justify her comments.

Dan discussed (initial interview) how he taught Lou sign language when she was younger. He explained "[Lou] did sign language as a child, did signing board books. Go through the books and practice signs since she was 18 months. [That is the] training I do." Dan described how Lou, at 18 months of age, sat on the couch with signing books and signed to herself. Dan gave an example "between 18 months and 2.5-years-old, she would come up, sign for milk (Dan made the sign for milk), [then] go lay down in bed. I thought [it] was hilarious. Lou doesn't do that anymore" (Dan, initial interview). Dan explained how at age three "she has forgotten sign language" (initial interview). In observation 1, Dan showed me a picture of Lou sitting on the couch with her signing books, signing "baby." Once in observation 2, Dan faced Lou and tapped his chin as if signing something to Lou.

Dan questioned Lou. In observation 1, Lou showed me a gray horse. She told me "yes, it can squirt water when you fill it up." Dan asked Lou "it can squirt water, how?" Lou stated "it squirts water when you fill it up." Dan asked her again "where does it squirt from? Where does the water come out?" Lou replied "the mouth." In the first stimulated recall interview, I asked Dan what he thought when he asked Lou about the gray horse squirting water. He replied "I was thinking she was mistaken. I wanted to see if she had discovered a way to make it happen. I still doubt that it does." Dan continued

“even though she is three, I hold her to a... When she makes statement of fact, I want her to prove it. That [is] why [I] wanted [her] to show me where the hole was” [in the horse.]

Referring to Lou’s speech, Dan explained how he listened to his children. “[I] try to listen to what they are saying. Try not to correct what they are saying all the time. Lou will be self-conscious later on” (Dan, stimulated recall interview 1).

In observation 1, Lou carried on a conversation about her toys in the bathtub. Lou told Dan “girl went in bathtub in water.” Dan asked “what is her name?” Lou responded “Strawberry Shortcake.” Then Dan helped Lou dress. They talked and laughed. Dan asked Lou “what day is it?” Lou replied “I don’t know.” Dan stated “it is Monday. Monday panties. Let’s get Monday panties.” Dan spelled out the word ‘Monday.’ “M-O-N-D-A-Y” (Dan, observation 1). Lou asked “why? I don’t want to.” Dan asked Lou “what color is it? Purple?” Dan justified why Lou needed to dress by discussing their plans for the day.

“**Big kid.**” The theme “*big kid*” referred to how Dan played like a “big kid” with Lou throughout the observations. Dan interacted with Lou like a “big kid” when he joined in play. Other children perceived Dan as a “*big kid*.”

Dan became a live jungle gym for Lou in observation 1. Dan held Lou’s hands while she walked up his legs and chest to flip backwards. Lou flipped ten times while she and Dan talked about Lou attending school. Exhausted, Dan told Lou “you are wearing me out.” He then flipped Lou onto his back horizontally. Dan asked Lou “where did you go?” Laughing, Lou replied “I am on your back.” Both Dan and Lou

chuckled and smiled. Lou said “I want to flip one more time.” Dan answered “just one last time.” Dan flipped her over again. In the first stimulated recall interview, I asked Dan his thoughts about this interaction with Lou. He exclaimed “flip? Well that just ah, you know, we don’t do it all that often. She will do it till tired or I tell her to stop. Example [of her] using me like a big playscape/jungle gym.” He continued “I was curious how long she would do it [flips]. No particular reason, for fun” (Dan, stimulated recall interview 1).

Other children saw Dan as a “big kid.” In observation 2, Dan climbed into the ball pit with Lou. He juggled a few plastic balls then started to throw the balls. Two boys climbed into the ball pit. One boy threw a ball at Dan and said “thrown like this.” Dan replied “oh.” Later, Dan told me “kids see and engage in conversation with me and think I am a big kid. Two kids in ball pit started throwing balls at me within 15 seconds.”

Another example (stimulated recall interview 2), Dan explained how his interactions with Lou may have changed if people they knew had been present. He explained:

If classmate, probably would have spent more time talking to parents than kids as some classmates there, they would play. Although my kids still would have [interacted] and if not mine, others would have because they think I am a big kid. I play chase, like the playground. One time walked down hallway [to the] computer lab. I would volunteer at computer lab till 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because after that they know how to type and stuff. There was a kid. I was walking and he came

over and tackled me. I don't know why. That's when I realized kids see me as a big kid which is not very helpful as a parent.

**Basketball techniques.** Dan provided physical activity and taught Lou basketball techniques.

In the initial interview, Dan explained why he bought a small basketball set for Lou. "She was not able to make it into the larger one [basketball arcade in their living room] so I got her a smaller basketball set-up. She hits that almost every time she shoots. She loves it! Especially, on Monday when not out playing with kids."

In observation 1, Dan enticed Lou to make a goal in the arcade basketball hoop in the living room. Dan also worked on Lou's tossing techniques. Dan said "I will, [blow up the balloon] one more time if you can make a basket." Dan bounced the basketball then handed it to Lou. Lou missed the basket. Dan instructed "oh, so close. Aim for the box above the basket." Lou asked "Dad can you help me?" Dan replied "yeah." Lou commented "you can hold me." Dan stated "I don't want to. That's not fair." Lou replied "no." Dan remarked "bounce pass." Lou exclaimed "no!" and laid her head down on the edge of the basketball goal. Dan proceeded to bounce pass the ball to Lou. She caught it. Dan said "you were getting closer. Okay, can you roll one from down here? Shoot like this." Dan raised his hands in a shooting motion. Lou asked "how?" Dan explained "you have to push." He demonstrated a shooting motion with one hand pushing off an imaginary basketball and the other hand guiding the ball into the basket. Lou threw the ball. Dan commented "fair is fair." He then blew the balloon up for Lou. When asked about this interaction and his thoughts, Dan responded:

Very surprised in that time, lots of little lessons: gross motors skills and fine motor skills to [lift] those heavy basketballs in air. We will play ball 5 to 10 minutes a day. Doesn't shoot balls as much. [We] do more bounce pass and then bounce pass and shoot [we] work on [from] time to time.

**Entertain herself.** Lou had opportunities to entertain herself. For *entertain herself* Lou played with ponies, read a book, and sang when Dan was preoccupied. Also, Dan explained Lou's need for alone time.

In the initial interview, Dan stated how Lou watched "*Paw Patrol* and *My little Pony*, till I make her get off." Lou also takes pictures with Dan's phone. Dan showed me pictures Lou took with his phone and said "She takes pictures of the ceiling, mouse, etc." Then in observation 1, Dan stated "she gets too much free time. She will go and do things where my other kids won't." Dan continued "she could play by herself for an hour or watch *Paw Patrol* or *My Little Pony* on the computer or TV."

I observed Lou entertain herself when Dan walked away. For example, in observation 1, Dan told Lou he would pour her cereal. Lou said "I am gonna bring ponies." She picked up two or three *My Little Ponies* and carried them to the table. She played with the ponies at the table while she waited for Dan. At one point she stood up from the table and played with her ponies, running across the room. Lou entertained herself with singing when Dan walked off. Lou played with her ponies and sang "I want to talk to you about the winter" (observation 1).

In observation 1, Lou picked up a book, laid down in the hallway, and talked to herself. She sang while she flipped through book pages. Dan asked her “are you gonna read a book? She replied “yeah.” Lou read the book a minute or two.

In stimulated recall interview two, I asked Dan if he had spent time observing Lou play at the indoor play facility after I left. He described how sometimes he observed Lou playing. He also explained how Lou needed to play by herself to decompress. Dan said “so anytime she wants to play by herself she likes some alone time, down time, decompression especially when go, go, go” (stimulated recall interview 2).

**Taking care of physical needs of child.** Throughout our interviews and observations, Dan met Lou’s physical needs. He helped her in the bathroom and helped her change clothes. He ensured she ate her food. Dan also ensured Lou was safe.

In the initial interview, Dan discussed how their day typically started:

Try to start wake her up, make breakfast, hope she eats, pack lunch. Not much interacting going on then, mainly just checking on her. So when under pressure to go to school, she doesn’t eat. Make sure she uses the bathroom, clothes” (Dan, initial interview).

Dan took care of Lou’s food needs in observation 1 when he asked her what she wanted for breakfast. He asked Lou if she wanted banana bread. She said “no.” He then asked if she wanted cereal with milk or eggs. Lou chose cereal. Dan walked into the kitchen to pour Lou’s cereal. He then decided Lou needed to change clothes.

Hugs and comfort were also evident. In observation 1, Lou crawled up on Dan’s lap to give him a hug. Then, during the first stimulated recall interview, Lou was sick. At

the end of the interview, Lou walked over to Dan and crawled on his lap. Dan tenderly said “hi sweet girl. I will hold you.” Dan moved Lou around so she was comfortable. He asked her multiple times if she was hungry, cold, or needed a sweater. Dan showed concern for Lou.

Dan ensured Lou was safe at the indoor play facility in observation 2. When asked about sliding down the double slide together (stimulated recall interview 2) Dan said “you have to kinda watch out for other kids on there. [They] walk up the slide and go up the other direction.” Another example, Dan told Lou to sit closer to the pole on the small disk pole spinner. When asked what he thought at that point in time, Dan revealed “[I was] afraid get turn[ed] ankle or something or foot under [the] disk. As fast as spinning, felt lucky came away without anyone getting hurt.”

**Sarcasm.** *Sarcasm* was noted throughout the interviews and observations.

In observation 1, Lou told Dan “Dad, I called you fat.” Dan replied “what?” Lou said “I called you fat, because you have a fat tummy.” Dan in a sarcastic tone replied “thanks for nothing.” When asked why Dan chose that response he stated “oh, because, I, you know she is kidding. Don’t know why [saying] about being fat. We have lot of sarcastic joking around. You know even at that age, she gets it.” He continued “a lot of talk in this house, if seen in writing, not nice but have to hear tone of voice” (stimulated recall interview 1). Dan added “probably has something to do with me calling me fat. She [Lou] is just starting to be funny that way on purpose.”



In observation 1, Lou asked Dan to blow up a balloon. Dan had blown up the balloon multiple times for Lou. He told her “okay, if I fall down on floor, don’t call 911, okay?” Lou laughed, agreed, and said “do it again.”

While playing with the cylinder ball chimney in observation 2, Dan threw balls at Lou’s back. She continued to pick up balls and stuff them into the cylinder ball chimney. I asked Dan (stimulated recall interview 2) what he was thinking at this point in time with this interaction. He claimed:

Wait, she was putting them in [the] chimney. I was waiting to see if she would notice. The balls are foam. I probably threw 10 [balls] at her and she didn’t notice, or noticed and didn’t care. Try throwing to chimney in bottom, a little rude so decided to throw at her, not beside [her]. Probably bad example to set [throwing things at others] because did with son and now [he] throws things at his sister. [I will say] ‘Don’t throw at sister. Where learn that from? Oh, from me.’

### **Themes on Dan’s Thoughts on the Interactions**

The following section describes emergent themes on the thoughts Dan had while interacting with his daughter Lou. Each of the themes will be explored with examples from the data.

**Know your child.** The theme *know your child* encompassed Dan’s knowledge of Lou’s likes and personality. Dan was friendly to Lou. Additionally, a competitive drive was observed from Lou when racing cars.

Dan knew Lou liked to play hide and seek. While doing flips in observation 1, Dan flipped Lou onto his back and asked her “where are you?” I asked him his thoughts in the first stimulated recall interview. Dan replied:

Oh, she likes to play hide and seek. She will say ‘Say where is Lou?’ and we will say ‘Where is Lou?’ It is just [a] familiar game she likes to do. I thought she might like it if I asked her, to begin without her asking. All kids like to spin and dance around. Like a dance move a[nd] something like that, and flips on back.

Lou asked to play Play-Doh in observation 1. When asked about his thoughts when helping Lou with the Play-Doh, Dan said “Play-Doh is an activity she loves to do. I don’t know so much about it these days. At school, wash hands, six activities, played Play-Doh.” Dan explained how when he asked Lou what she did at school, she responded with “Play-Doh.” Dan continued “[Play-Doh is] something she likes to do and I can interact or not.”

Dan knew Lou liked the tea cup spinners at the indoor play facility. In the second stimulated recall interview, I asked Dan his thoughts when he spun Lou in the tea cup spinner.

He replied:

She, loves to do this. I knew she would want to do that. It is too bad she goes for the fun thing first. Try to top it the rest of the time. Try to top that, not as exciting. She will want to ride roller coasters.

In stimulated recall interview one, Dan discussed Lou’s behaviors. He said “she is the best about copying my positive behaviors and leaving out negative behaviors.” He

described “it is Tuesday night [trash night]. Two weeks ago she said ‘I will get the trash’ and she went and collected it. She likes to help with stuff I don’t ask and not do what I ask” (stimulated recall interview 1). Dan explained how Lou may not put on her shoes when asked but took out the trash when not asked.

Dan and Lou had a friendly relationship. Throughout observation 2, Lou laughed often. When Lou talked to Dan, he bent down to her height. Lastly, I noticed Dan used manners with Lou. For example, Lou said “Daddy, I cover you up with balls. You lay down.” Dan replied “no, I don’t want to lay down.” Lou mumbled something inaudible. Dan followed with “thank you, though.”

Dan willingly participated in activities which did not interest him because Lou enjoyed the activity. In stimulated recall interview two, when asked about throwing balls and covering Lou up, Dan explained “I didn’t want to go in there. Step on it and ball crinkles in. Kids put in mouth, all over their face. It’s dirty. But it is fun; suits her.” Dan continued “[the] ball pit is a lot of sensory stimulation; bright colors. Throw [balls] around and don’t hurt anything. She likes that. I like it especially if don’t have to run and chase and pick-up anything.”

Dan encouraged Lou. While brushing Lou’s hair (observation 1), Dan praised Lou “you’re doing great. You know that. No fussing, crying like a baby. How did you do that? You didn’t flinch but maybe once.” When asked about his response, Dan explained:

Just trying to encourage her to be good. Not often catch kids being good and positive reinforcement. Any chance I get to be present and think of that. That was

intentional [his response to Lou]. For every good phrase [that] come[s] out of my mouth, I thought about a dozen I didn't think about (stimulated recall interview 1).

A competitive drive was evidenced through Dan and Lou's behaviors. In the initial interview Dan mentioned "[with] games/board games, Lou is overtly competitive." Lou's competitive nature was evident in observation 1 while racing cars with Dan on the kitchen floor. Dan and Lou, were next to each other with their hands and knees on the floor. They pushed their cars forward, then let go. They raced to see which car went the furthest. Dan's car lost. Dan stated "I am gonna get another [car that goes] further." Lou enthusiastically told Dan "your's too slow! Dad, I know which car's the fastest." She handed him a car. Dan and Lou raced cars again. Dan exclaimed "I need license. Can't get across floor." Lou smacked two cars together and said "haha. I won, you lost." Dan asked Lou "are you smack talking me? Is that [the] winner's circle?" Lou replied "I get a surprise! Winner circle! [If you lose, you] get in trouble." Dan explained "you don't get in trouble if you don't win. You just don't win a prize." When asked what he thought about racing cars with Lou, Dan answered "I didn't think a lot of it; motor skills and competition. So couldn't get car to drive, win, competitive" (stimulated recall interview 1). Later Dan stated "I think symmetry of competitiveness [is a] good component a little bit. Probably incorrect parent behavior. I always try to have children beat me." Dan discussed Lou's competitiveness in the stimulated recall interview one "I can't think not a lot of me, a lot of her." One example in observation 1 was when Lou said "Dad, race again. Let me win."

**“Mindful.”** The theme “*mindful*” entailed how Dan made comments that gave insight into his parenting beliefs and how he interacted with his children. “*Mindful*” included Dan’s thoughts on his influence on Lou’s social development and paying attention to Lou’s behaviors and comments.

Dan was mindful with his interactions with Lou. In the initial interview, Dan described a joke Lou told about a puddle in the road. Lou asked Dan “hey Dad, why doesn’t your car drive through big puddles?” He replied “I don’t know, why?” She said “because it doesn’t have any feet.” I asked him what he thought when he responded to Lou’s joke. He mentioned “well, depends on how present in the moment I am. I am not always thinking.” Dan referred to the joke “[I] knew it was going to be bad. Try to be encouraging [with] any behaviors [I] want to encourage [like] eating well [and] doing what asked.” Dan gave an example “Tuesday [was] trash night [it is my] older daughter’s job. Lou said she wanted to do it.” Dan reflected “maybe I am modeling better [than] before, because of more mindful with [how to] interact and stuff she does than probably with other kids.”

In the initial interview, I asked Dan to explain how he believed his interactions with Lou influenced her social development. “Well, I think a lot of that has to do with the personality type of the child” (Dan, initial interview). Dan referred to interacting with his older children just as much as with Lou. “I think [I] interacted with kids the same amount.” He expressed “expose her to situations, playing outside, playing with friends, element of danger with mostly, will learn bad things happen when not paying attention.” Essentially, when Dan told Lou not to do something dangerous, she listened.

**Not missing out.** The theme *not missing out* summarized Dan's interactions with his children.

While at the indoor play facility (stimulated recall interview 2), Dan commented "many times kids can go in there and find someone else to play with. A lot of parents hope for that, [so they] can be on their devices. They are kind of missing out; don't see their kids play."

Dan explained how Lou interacted with him and his wife while cooking. "She gets stepstool and [says] 'Can I help? Can I help?' then she just takes over and it is us helping/interacting with her" (Dan, initial interview). He also explained how Lou interacted with him. "She is getting to be, she told me a joke the other day she made up herself. She is involving me" (Dan, initial interview).

In the ball pit in observation 2, Lou told Dan "Daddy, bury me up." Dan asked "bury you?" "Yeah" Lou replied. Dan covered Lou with balls. Dan adjusted Lou while saying "here." He continued piling balls on top of Lou. When Dan asked "where is Lou?" Lou popped up quickly, laughing. Balls flew everywhere. Lou laid down again. Dan covered her. He commented "where did Lou go? I should take a picture. Wait. Don't move. Wait." Dan moved to the middle, to take a picture. Dan told Lou "okay ready, explode!" Lou popped up slowly "okay, here I am." When asked about his thoughts and why he went into the ball pit with Lou, Dan explained "I don't know because I told her I wasn't go[ing] to go in. I kinda went in by degrees. Went in to sit on steps then playing with balls. [I] never want[ed] to go in as a kid. She seemed to be

enjoying it a lot. I figured we will be here a little bit so I might as well get in and play along” (stimulated recall interview 2).

### **Summary of Themes in Case One**

Dan was observed *teaching social skills* such as advising Lou how to play with other children. *Communication* was developed between Dan and Lou through the use of sign language and questions designed to encourage Lou to think. At times he himself acted like a “*big kid*” playing in the same activities as Lou. *Basketball techniques* was important to Dan because he believed in promoting physical activity whenever possible. When Dan was preoccupied, Lou was able to *entertain herself* by singing, looking at books and playing with her toys. Dan was observed as *taking care of physical needs of child* such as providing food for Lou and ensuring she was safe. Dan also used *sarcasm* in comments and responses to Lou as a form of shared humor. Dan’s’ actions expressed how as a parent *to know your child*. Dan was “*mindful*” of Lou’s personality. For Dan *not missing out* on what Lou did when they played together was significant.

### **Case Study Two: Arnie and Sally**

#### **Design of the Case Study**

The focus of this case study was on Arnie, a middle-aged man and Sally, his 2.5-year-old daughter. The initial interview conducted with Arnie lasted approximately an hour. Eight days after the initial interview, was observation 1 at Arnie and Sally’s apartment. A week later, observation 2 was at a local park near Arnie and Sally’s apartment. Observations lasted approximately an hour each. Within 48 hours of each observation was a stimulated recall interview lasting approximately an hour. Sally was

present at the initial interview, both observations, and both stimulated recall interviews. Field notes were recorded within 24 hours and transcripts were transcribed within 72 hours following each interview and observation. Transcripts resulted in 394 units of data. A reflexive journal was kept throughout recruiting, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Introducing the Case**

Arnie was a tall, Caucasian gentleman with peppered gray hair, roughly in his 30's. He was friendly, caring, and patient. He showed affection for Sally, his 2.5-year-old daughter, by giving hugs, tickling, and attending to her needs.

Arnie was a SAHF for 2 years and 6 months at the time of the initial interview. His wife was finishing her degree while planning their wedding. She became pregnant with Sally soon after they married. At the time, Arnie was bartending in the service industry. He decided to stay home with Sally since his income would have been allocated for daycare. Arnie explained “umm, my wife got pregnant. Um, she's a CPA. So looking at the cost of daycare and everything associated with it, we would clear more if I quit working than daycare. Choice to take care of child than daycare” (Arnie, initial interview).

Sally was tall for her age. She had auburn curls to her shoulders. She was talkative, although, due to her age, her speech was difficult to understand. Sally participated in dance lessons. In the upcoming fall, Sally will attend a private Catholic preschool.



Sally was quiet at first but warmed up to me within fifteen minutes after we met. Considered shy by her father, she smiled often. Throughout the observations, Sally tried to engage me in play. She handed me toys. By observation 2, she tried to engage me in play by calling my name. Sally's behaviors demonstrated her comfort level around me and her ability to socialize with people she did not know well.

The first observation was at Arnie and Sally's apartment. In the initial interview, Arnie pointed out the window to the hospital where Sally had been born. I would learn how Sally enjoyed living in the city and peering out the windows to the city below. Spotting ambulances and police cars or watching trains and trollies was a game for Sally and Arnie. The second observation was at a park a few blocks walk from Arnie and Sally's apartment.

### **Themes on Types of Interactions**

The following section describes emergent themes on the types of interactions between Arnie and his daughter Sally. Each of the themes will be described with examples from the data.

**Teaching.** Much of Arnie and Sally's time spent together was Arnie teaching Sally. The theme *teaching* referred to Arnie teaching Sally colors, asking questions, reminding Sally to use her words, and praising Sally for sharing.

Sally and Arnie played in Sally's room throughout observation 1. Sally did not talk often. At various times while they played, Arnie asked Sally questions related to counting, letter names, and colors. If Sally did not answer correctly, Arnie corrected her or had her try again. If she did not answer at all, Arnie said the answer for her. For

example, Arnie asked Sally “super Minnie. What color is Minnie?” Sally answered “green.” Arnie replied “no, try again.” Sally answered “green.” Arnie corrected her “no, purple.” Sally repeated after Arnie “purple.” Arnie asked “what color are Minnie’s ears?” Sally did not answer. When I asked Arnie what he thought when he asked Sally the color questions, he replied “I wanted to work on that [knowing names of colors] through play so she, so it comes natural and she starts spouting out stuff.”

While playing in Sally’s room (observation 1), Sally handed a Duplo train engine to Arnie and said “this, this.” Arnie asked “want to make a train? Choo-choo?” He built a train. When asked about his thoughts during this interaction, Arnie said “umm, she can be shy and we’ve been try[ing] to work on her using her words instead of point and grunt. With her starting school, we don’t want her teacher to have to try to guess” (stimulated recall interview 1). Point and grunt was observed in observation 1. When Arnie and Sally were in the kitchen. Arnie reminded Sally “use your words. You got to use your words.”

In observation 1, Sally handed me toys. Arnie told Sally “thank you for sharing.” I asked Arnie in the first stimulated recall interview why he told Sally “thank you for sharing.” Arnie stated “umm, [I] want to reinforce good behaviors” (stimulated recall interview 1). He also explained “being the only child, sometimes we have sharing issues with like, when friends come over. Again, with school starting in August, want her to not be that [omitted] to be able to share. We want her to not be selfish and be okay with sharing.”

**“Showing affection.”** *“Showing affection”* referred to how Arnie and Sally gave each other hugs. The ease with which they both gave and received hugs indicated this was common practice in their relationship.

Arnie and Sally colored a picture in observation 1. Arnie told Sally “ahh, give you hugs.” He picked her up into the air. Sally laughed. When asked about this interaction and why he decided to give Sally hugs and lift her into the air, Arnie said “um, show her affection and play a little bit. She likes the thrill of the fall. She thinks it’s funny” (stimulated recall interview 1).

Several times at the park (observation 2), Arnie caught Sally as she came off the slide or picked her up for a big hug. However, sometimes Sally instigated the hugs. For example, hopping over to Arnie, Sally said “Dadda, me.” Arnie picked Sally up for a warm embrace. Sally pointed to a slide and said “sli, sli. [Slide, slide.] Yes!” Arnie responded “okay, let’s go down the slide.” They both walked to the rock wall. Arnie helped Sally climb up, then watched Sally slide down the slide (observation 2).

**Caring for Sally’s needs.** Arnie cared for Sally. He addressed her physical needs such as ensuring she was not hungry. Arnie also addressed Sally’s emotional needs by praising her behavior.

Arnie described how he and Sally interacted on a daily basis. “How interact? [I would] say [we are] very affectionate toward one another. Lots of hugs. If on couch she lays on me, rough house and jump on the bed. We will have conversations. She will tell me if she needs anything. Um, we are pretty close” (initial interview). He proceeded to show me a picture of himself with Sally. Both smiled in the picture and Sally’s arm was

draped around Arnie's neck. He said "you know, I kinda give her, her space when she needs it" (initial interview). Arnie described his reaction when Sally seeks his attention "[I] try to stop what I am doing if [I am] not distracted with something else. [I] usually, try to stop what I am doing and see what she needs. [She may] grab [my] hand and take me to the fridge for milk in the middle of the day or [a] cheese stick if [she] already had one. Usually when she is coming to get me, it is for something" (initial interview).

Taking care of Sally's physical needs. When we left the park (observation 2), Arnie told Sally, "[let's] go home, get water, [and] grapes." While eating grapes, Arnie picked up a grape and stuck out his tongue. Sally picked up a grape. She leaned towards Arnie as if handing him the grape but then chuckled and plopped the grape in her own mouth. Arnie picked up a grape and said "Sally, look!" He made an exaggerated face, stuck out his tongue and then plopped the grape in his mouth. Arnie asked Sally "do you want more water? Sally, you want more water? Sally, Sally, Sally, Sally, Sally, would you like more water?" In stimulated recall interview two, when asked about his exaggerated expression while eating the grape, Arnie explained "[I was] just trying to make eating fun. It can be mundane sometimes for her. Keeping it interesting can be a good thing sometimes."

Taking care of Sally's emotional needs. At the park (observation 2), Sally walked over to the rock wall to climb up the slide. Arnie stood behind her to direct her where to place her foot and ensure she did not fall. Once she reached the top, Arnie praised her saying "good job!" When asked in the second stimulated recall interview, about praising Sally with a "good job" Arnie said it was to give "positive reinforcement for climbing

the wall.” Another positive reinforcement was observed when Sally landed at the bottom of a slide. She looked at Arnie and jumped two times with excitement. Arnie exclaimed “good job! You did it!”

**Safety concerns.** Arnie gave Sally directions, redirection, and caution for safety reasons. *Safety concerns* was seen throughout each observation and discussed within each interview. Arnie was observant of Sally’s behavior and aware of her safety.

Arnie was asked in the initial interview “how do you respond when Sally is seeking your attention?” He replied “um, sometimes when cooking, she wants to be right there. Maybe frying, cooking, [oil] popping. [I] do try to be on her level and tell her to do something else: go play, color, do something else when something [she] shouldn’t be around.” Adding a recent example, Arnie explained “we have a thing, instant pot, pressure cooker. She will sit on counter and stir and help. She saw the instant pot and she couldn’t [help,] knives and shit up there. I got on her level, gave her the marker [and] took her to the [easel] board.” He continued “[I] tried to get her to write her name on the board” (Arnie, initial interview). When asked what he thought when he responded to Sally in the example he gave, Arnie explained “the first one [cooking] safety thing as well as like, I couldn’t concentrate enough on her to make sure she was safe while I was doing what I was doing. Don’t want to put her in that predicament.”

*Safety concerns* were observed in observation 1 with cooking. When asked about his response to Sally “okay, let me chop” Arnie stated “umm, we’ve worked on being aware of knives and that is for adults, not her. So when working she is not to reach. We

are still working on knives are not for kids and that there is still element of danger to them.”

In observation 1, Sally grabbed Arnie’s keys off the kitchen counter. Arnie asked her several times to put the keys back. He then asked Sally “1, 2, do you want a timeout?” When asked about his response to Sally, Arnie replied “umm, my keys are sharp and they have... I don’t want them to wonder off and not be able to be found. She wants, it takes her a second sometimes to count 1, 2, then say want a time out? She will say ‘no’ than time to correct her.” Clarifying, Arnie said “yea, so say 1, 2, and I reinforce if I get to 3, she will go to time out. So 3, typically she will say ‘no’ and do what you are asking and then sometimes we go to time out (chuckled)” (Arnie, stimulated recall interview 1).

Safety at the park. At the park (observation 2), Sally watched a girl climb up a slide the wrong way. Sally looked as though she wanted to climb up the slide the wrong way, too. Arnie watched Sally’s body language. He told her “no, we are not supposed to climb up.” When asked why he chose this response, Arnie explained “um, she gets in trouble for climbing up slides. The slide at that park had low sides and I’m afraid she will fall off the slide.”

### **Themes on Arnie’s Thoughts on the Interactions**

The following section describes emergent themes on the thoughts Arnie had while interacting with his daughter Sally. Each of the themes will be explored with examples from the data.

**“Remaining engaged.”** Arnie was engaged with Sally in different ways. He made comments like “she’s a cool kid.” Arnie explained how he believed his interactions influenced Sally’s social development “um, I think I taught her to be pretty strong and firm if something is bothering her. Confident in herself [and] pretty shy. I think part of that is, mommy is pretty shy, too” (initial interview).

Arnie was attentive to what Sally was doing. Arnie explained how Sally involved him with what she does “we will, when she is painting, she will want me to come over and draw turtles. She likes to do color magic, color change blue and yellow to make green. She likes to skip down the hall and jump. She will say ‘come on’ if you do that with her” (initial interview).

In observation 2, after the students left the park, Sally walked over to Arnie and grabbed his hand. Arnie asked Sally “where [are] we going?” Sally pulled Arnie behind her and walked over to the treehouse. Then they both sat down talking [inaudible] in the treehouse. When asked about his reaction and thoughts to Sally pulling him by the hand, Arnie said “here we go (chuckled). I mean, she tends to grab hands and pull you to whatever she wants to do, so...” (stimulated recall interview 2). Explaining why he decided to follow Sally after she grabbed his hand, he remarked “just remain[ing] engaged with her play” (stimulated recall interview 2). When asked why he decided to sit under the treehouse he said “um, she had asked me to come in and sit with her. Then, there’s little steps in there she likes to climb. Sometimes she needs help. She will get stuck sometimes.”

**“Just a bonding thing.”** *“Just a bonding thing”* referred to Arnie and Sally’s relationship. When asked about how Sally and he interacted on a daily basis, Arnie stated “I would say we are friends but [there is] still that parent aspect where [when needed Sally] get[s] time out or something taken away, something like that” (initial interview).

Arnie involved Sally with cooking (observation 1). *“Just a bonding thing”* was evident in the following vignette:

Arnie walked to the kitchen and cleaned out the dishwasher. Meanwhile, Sally sat quietly eating blueberries in the living room. Arnie asked Sally “can Daddy get dinner started? You want to cook?” Sally mumbled something inaudible. Arnie asked Sally again “do you want to help cook?” Arnie, walked by Sally and checked his phone. In the kitchen, Arnie asked Sally “do you want to help cook?” In a few seconds, Arnie repeated the question “do you want to help?” Meanwhile, Arnie continued to prepare dinner. Arnie changed his tactic. He asked Sally specifically “want to help cook rice and beans?” Sally replied enthusiastically “help!” Sally walked into the kitchen then stood next to Arnie. Arnie replied “okay, let me chop.” Arnie chopped vegetables. After a few minutes Arnie asked “Sally, do you want to cook?” Sally moved closer to Arnie to help. Arnie suggested “let’s get your stool, your red stool. Do you want to mix?” Arnie and Sally retrieved Sally’s red stool. Sally climbed up on the stool to stir the contents within the pressure cooker.



When asked why Arnie decided to ask Sally if she wanted to help cook and his thoughts, he replied “umm, just a bonding thing. Some [thing] that, that, oh, something I like to do and if she wants to do it too. I can’t take her out to play golf (chuckling)” (stimulated recall interview 1).

**“Let her figure it out.”** Sally interacted with adults and other children. Arnie sometimes observed Sally’s interactions with others.

Sally interacted with other children when we were at the park in observation 2. For example, after Sally went down a slide, she turned and watched the next child slide. Then she jumped up and down saying “sli, sli!” [slide, slide!] Another example, Sally climbed up the steps to the bridge on the playscape. A boy accidentally bumped into her. She did not seem upset. She stared at the child for a few seconds then slid down the slide.

While at the park (observation 2), Arnie observed Sally playing. When asked about these non-interactions and his thoughts, Arnie answered “like kinda standing back? Ah, letting her interact with other kids even older kids. She doesn’t get a lot of interaction, when it happens I try to stand back and let her figure it out” (stimulated recall interview 2).

We waited at a crosswalk for the traffic light to change when we walked back to the apartment from the park. Stopped at the traffic light next to us was a man and a woman on a motorcycle. The woman smiled at Sally. When the light changed, the woman waved to Sally and Sally waved back.

**“Testing boundaries.”** *“Testing boundaries”* was described in the initial interview with Sally’s attitude on the iPad. *“Testing boundaries”* was also evident when leaving the park in observation 2.

In the initial interview, Arnie discussed how interactions changed between Sally and him. Arnie stated “interactions have changed even since 3 or 4 months ago. [She is] testing boundaries; consistency is harder. More interacting now than ‘hey don’t do that.’ More interpersonal than dictatorship” (initial interview). Arnie continued “she is trying to push boundaries. See what she can get away with.” Arnie pointed to a red stool. He continued “red stool, [she] stand[s] to get things off [the] counter. [I] kept telling her no, [go to] time out. [She] got herself a time out this morning.” Sally used the red stool to reach something on the kitchen counter and after a warning, she was sent to time out.

*“Testing boundaries”* was evident with how Sally reacts when playing on her iPad. Arnie said “she [Sally] wants you to be present and do stuff with her, unless she is on the iPad, not very often, kinda wants to be by herself. Attitude with that, kinda tell attitude changes, so take that away for a day or so to kinda level her out” (initial interview).

When leaving the park (observation 2), *“testing boundaries”* occurred. The vignette follows:

Arnie asked Sally “you’re getting hot and sweaty, ready to go inside? Get some water?” Sally replied “no, no!” Sally looked at me and said “Kawa, Kawa, in treehus” [Kayla, Kayla, in treehouse]. Arnie instructed Sally “go up, outside.” Sally climbed in the treehouse then slid down the slide.

Arnie retrieved Sally's tricycle she had ridden to the park. Sally saw Arnie's actions then cried "no! No!" She went back to the treehouse. Sally and Arnie walked over to the rock wall. Arnie directed Sally "please, over here." Sally climbed the rock wall then slid down the slide. Arnie declared "okay, let's go. Time to go." Sally cried "no! No!" Arnie said "alright one more [slide]." Sally slid down the slide. Then, Arnie picked Sally up and sat her on her tricycle. Sally shook her head and cried "no."

I asked Arnie about this interaction and allowing "one more slide" in stimulated recall interview two. Arnie explained "it's not an emergency leave or have to leave at that point. If she wants to slide and keep running around it just behooves me because it just means she will fall asleep easier. Um, it wasn't [a] time pressing issue. Didn't hurt anything." I asked how his response may have changed if leaving the park was time pressing. Arnie described "I would say 'no, time to go' and if she refused, pick her up and go from there. Take her outside the park and put her on her bike and go from there" (stimulated recall interview 2).

Another example of "*testing boundaries*" was back at the apartment, after the park (observation 2). Arnie had Sally wash her hands for snack. Arnie told Sally "let's eat your grapes at the table. Let's sit at the table." Sally walked over and sat next to Arnie. She ate her grapes without saying anything. A few minutes later, Sally crawled under the table between Arnie and me. Arnie said "oh, busted, got you. Come sit down. Eat your snack, eat more grapes." He then asked Sally "do you want snuggles?" Arnie

picked up Sally and hugged her. They snuggled for a moment. Arnie explained in the stimulated recall interview two “umm, she [Sally] doesn’t like to just sit at the table. She wants to play. Like sitting down for a meal can be a pain sometimes. If gets up, so sitting down for snacks is just as important. If [she] gets up, so, put dishes in the sink.” He clarified “she, we [have] been trying to do more and more chores as she gets older. So, try to have her put [her] plate in the sink. Then bath time, nighttime routine from there. She doesn’t do it all the time, has to be reminded. That’s where that comes from” (stimulated recall interview 2).

### **Summary of Themes in Case Two**

Arnie demonstrated *teaching* Sally concepts she needed for school such as sharing and learning colors. Arnie and Sally were comfortable “*showing affection*” for each other through hugs and tickles. He demonstrated *caring for Sally’s needs* by providing food and emotional support. *Safety concerns* was an important theme for Arnie especially in the kitchen and while playing in the park. Arnie gave Sally space to “*let her figure it out*” when it came to interacting with other children. Arnie knew Sally’s personality and “*remaining engaged*” with her play. “*Just a bonding thing*” included how they shared time together such as cooking. Lastly, there were times when Sally was “*testing boundaries*” with her behaviors.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The primary focus of this study was to examine the interactions between SAHFs and their 2.5 to 4-year-old children. Interactions were defined as a father's' "...direct contact with his child, through caretaking and shared activities" (Lamb et al., 1985, p. 884). A secondary focus of the study was to explore the availability and responsibility of SAHFs with their children. Lamb et al. (1985) defined availability as the physical distance of the father from the child. Responsibility referred to the father taking care of the child's physical or emotional needs (Lamb et al., 1985).

Literature on SAHFs has focused on masculine identities (e.g., Hegarty, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2016; Medved & Rawlins, 2011; Shirani et al., 2012), masculinity and social class (Liong, 2017), self-image (Merla, 2008; Rochlen, McKelley, et al., 2008), gender ideology (Kramer & Kramer, 2016) gender roles (e.g., Chesley, 2011; Chesley & Flood, 2017; Latshaw, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000), and other people's views and stereotypes of SAHFs (Hoewe et al., 2017). For this study, SAHFs were observed interacting with their children. Their thoughts behind these interactions were explored.

Both SAHF participants in this study, Dan and Arnie, chose to leave their jobs to be SAHFs. For Dan, the choice was influenced by economic and job-related circumstances. His experience is akin to Knop and Brewster's (2016) observation of an increase in father involvement due to the economic recession of 2006 to 2010. Although Dan's decision to become a SAHF was by choice, the decision came when his family economics changed following the birth of his son. This change for Dan and his family,

was described by Doucet (2016) as a SAHF's "role unfolding" (p. 7). The second SAHF, Arnie, decided to stay home after finding out his wife was pregnant. Arnie was bartending but realized his income would primarily pay for childcare, so decided to stay home.

Father involvement was defined in this study as the interactions of a father and child through direct contact and shared activities (Lamb et al.'s, 1985). Given this definition, Dan and Arnie can both be considered involved fathers. Dan and Arnie cared for their children in many ways through play, teaching, and ensuring physical needs were met. Yet, differences were found within the themes found in each dyad. The following themes were found with Dan and Lou: *teaching social skills, communication, "big kid," basketball techniques, entertain herself, taking care of physical needs of child, sarcasm, know your child, "mindful," and not missing out*. In contrast, themes found with Arnie and Sally were *teaching, caring for Sally's needs, safety concerns, "let her figure it out," "showing affection," "remaining engaged," "just a bonding thing," and "testing boundaries."*

The following two research questions guided this study:

**Research Question 1: What Types of Interactions Occur Between SAHFs With Their 2.5 to 4-Year-Old Children?**

The types of interactions between the SAHFs and their preschool-aged children reflected social skill development, socialization, and learning social skills.

## **Social Skill Development**

In 3 and 4-year-old children, social development focuses on children's ability to play well with other children, share toys, follow simple rules, show signs of independence, have imaginary friends, and carry on short conversations (Informed Parents-Successful Children, 2008; Papalia et al., 2007; The Early Childhood Direction Center, 2012). In observations of Lou and Sally not all of these social skills were observed. However, Lou and Sally were age appropriate in the social skills that were observed. For example, Lou followed simple rules, showed independence, and carried on conversations with Dan. Whereas, Sally being two-and-a-half, shared toys, often followed Arnie's requests, and played independently for short periods of time. Sally tried to engage in conversations, but her speech is not understandable at this time.

## **Socialization**

Susskind (2007) stated "socialization, is not a unidirectional influence, where society simply affects the individual. Instead, relationships are perceived as bidirectional. That is, the parent affects the child's development, as well as the child impacting the parent's." (p. 2). Bidirectional socialization was evident in the case of Lou and Dan. Lou asked Dan to blow up a balloon in Observation 1. Dan, tired of blowing up the balloon, asked Lou to wait. Lou insisted he continue blowing up the balloon until Dan finally gave into her request. In this case, Lou impacted Dan's interactions with her.

Lamb (2010) described how fathers and mothers influence their children given their own social characteristics and care-taking behaviors. Dan and Lou's interactions supported Lamb's (2010) description. For example, Dan's *sarcasm* behaviors were also

observed in Lou. Throughout the observations, Lou made sarcastic comments which emulated Dan's. For example, in observation 1, Lou sarcastically told Dan he was fat. He replied to Lou "thanks for nothing" (Dan, observation 1). In this case, Dan influenced Lou's behaviors by his own behaviors.

### **Learning Social Skills**

SAHFs place an emphasis on the importance of their child learning social skills. SAHFs value their children learning good social skills (Rochlen, Suizzo et al., 2008). Arnie indicated the importance of Sally learning good social skills before attending preschool in the fall. Arnie said "thank you" to Lou when she handed me toys. He referred to saying "thank you" as teaching Lou positive behaviors and learning how to share, especially since she was an only child (stimulated recall interview 1).

Limit-setting, as observed in this study, aligning with the findings of Rochlen, Suizzo et al. (2008) findings. "The fathers in our study emphasized warmth and emotional support as much as limit-setting and teaching children rules for social interactions" (p. 203). Arnie set limits for Sally. For example, at the park (observation 2), Arnie told Sally to use another slide so she would not slide into a younger child. Arnie also instructed Sally not to crawl up the slide the wrong way.

### **Research Question 2: What are the Thoughts of SAHFs When Interacting With Their Children?**

Dan and Arnie described their thoughts behind their interactions with their children and explained how these interactions built needed social skills.



The opportunity to observe, social interactions outside of the dyads was limited. However, Dan and Arnie both taught their children how to interact with others. With Dan and Lou, Dan emphasized the importance for Lou to slide down the slide in observation 2 because another child was waiting behind her. Dan explained, he wanted Lou to realize she could not keep others waiting at the top of a slide (stimulated recall interview 2).

Tronick (2008) described how positive social interactions develop positive emotions, curiosity, coping skills, and close relationships. Arnie gave Sally hugs and tickled her as a way to develop positive emotions and a close relationship between the two. When Arnie involved Sally in a cooking activity, she experience parent-child bonding. Prosocial behaviors were modeled as they worked together to help with a family need.

### **Availability and Responsibility: A Secondary Focus**

Availability and responsibility were secondary foci in this study. Availability referred to the physical distance the father was from the child (Lamb et al., 1985). Availability was observed in both dyads. Dan was available the majority of the time during both observations. Arnie was always available for Sally. At one point in observation 1, Arnie took time to clean out the dishwasher and start dinner. During this time he was within eye-sight of Sally. Therefore, given Lamb et al.'s (1985) definition of availability both Dan and Arnie were availability for their children.

Responsibility was the father taking care of the child's physical or emotional needs (Lamb et al., 1985). Dan and Arnie focused on caring for their child, a form of

involvement based on Lamb et al.'s (1985) responsibility definition. Caring for needs was a theme found in both dyads. Dan cared for Lou's physical needs such as dressing, using the bathroom, and ensuring she ate. Arnie was concerned with Sally's physical needs such as using the bathroom and eating but also her emotional needs such as giving Sally hugs or tickling her. Additionally, Arnie ensured Sally's safety by protecting her from sharp items in the house and instructing her in the safe way to use a slide in the park. These themes within both dyads refer back to what Lamb et al. (1985) would consider as a form of responsibility in father involvement.

Findings of SAHFs taking care of their child's physical and emotional needs are not new to the literature. Doucet (2006), Doucet and Merla (2007), and Solomon (2014b) noted physical touch and emotional connection interactions between SAHFs and their children. Solomon (2014b) concluded SAHFs who showed "...gentle physical affection, emotional intimacy, shared leisure and being in tune with their children's emotional needs" (p. 61) participated in "engaged fathering." The participants demonstrated physical contact like holding hands and an emotional connection by talking with their children. In this study, Both SAHFs talked often with their children. Therefore, supporting their child's emotional growth according to Solomon (2014b). Additionally, Arnie supported Sally's emotional growth through physical contact such as hugs and tickling. Physical contact and emotional support could be referred back to Lamb et al.'s (1985) definition of responsibility.

### **Dyad Differences and Similarities**

Interactions observed between Dan and Lou differed from interactions observed between Arnie and Sally. One factor for this difference could be the children's age or birth order. Lou was 3-years-old and the third child whereas, Sally was an only child and 2.5-years-old. The developmental level of the child and parenting views could also contribute to the differences. One noticeable difference between the dyads was Arnie's obvious concern for Sally's safety. Another difference was Dan's use of sarcasm and humor when communicating with Lou.

A similarity between Dan and Arnie was their play interactions with their children. Both Dan and Arnie aligned with Doucet (2006) and Stevens (2015) findings of SAHFs engaging in play with their children. Marsiglio (1991) and Child Trends (2002) found fathers often engaged in physical and outdoor play with their preschool children. Dan and Arnie both regularly engaged in outdoor play with their children. Dan allowed Lou to climb on him. His interest in teaching her basketball skills aligned with Doucet (2006), Doucet and Merla (2007), and Stevens (2015) of SAHFs engaging in sport related and physical activity with their children.

Dan and Arnie both attended a playgroup. Consistent with the literature, Doucet (2006) found SAHFs attended playgroups. Attending playgroups gave children a way to interact with peers. *Teaching social skills*, a theme with Dan and Lou, was evidenced through Dan's comments of Lou learning how to interact with her peers during playgroups.

### **Other Findings**

Fagan et al. (2016) found father involvement with reading and play also impacted preschool-aged children's language acquisition. Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2008) and Planalp and Braungart-Rieker (2016) found fathers were involved with cognitively stimulating activities based on the child's age. However, in this study, reading, storytelling, and singing songs were not found during the observations of either dyad. Although, this observation was consistent with Marsiglio's (1991) finding that fathers of preschool-aged children did not read to their children. However, Dan and Arnie were present in the moment. Dan answered Lou's questions and Arnie asked Sally questions regarding shapes, colors, and letters. A specific time designated for working on school readiness skills was not observed nor discussed in interviews. More time with each dyad in this study could have resulted in the observation of reading and other school readiness skill behaviors.

### **Limitations**

Recruiting difficulties in this study led to limitations in sampling. As discussed by Latshaw (2011), a SAHF must be willing to identify as a SAHF. In this study, fathers may have been reluctant to identify as a SAHF. Given parenting skills were observed, fathers who volunteered for this study may have self-selected because of their parenting skill confidence. Whereas, other fathers may have been reluctant to participant if their parenting skill confidence was low.

A broad search criteria for SAHFs who were not SAHFs by choice may help with finding a larger and more diverse sample. A future study will need to examine ethnic and

diverse SAHF's interactions with their children. With two case studies presented here, more studies are needed to analyze the interactions between SAHFs and their children. However, this was one of the first studies, to the author's knowledge, that directly observed children in the care of a SAHF. Additionally, sampling for diverse SAHFs was needed as indicated by several sources (Child Trends, 2012; Fagan et al., 2016; Heppner & Heppner, 2009; Medved, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2016).

Another limitation was the time spent in the field. Additional observations and stimulated recall interviews would have assisted in gathering more data across different contexts. Future studies should focus on additional observations between SAHFs and children in different settings and times of the day to have a broader view of the "typical" day of a child in the care of a SAHF.

### **Implications**

As the number of SAHFs rise, the need to understand the interactions between SAHFs and their children will also continue to rise. Father involvement has been shown to have positive effects on children's behavior (Kroll et al., 2016), cognitive emotional skills in boys (Baker, 2017), learning and motivation at school (Lau, 2016), and language acquisition (Fagan et al., 2016). However, the effects of SAHFs caring for their children, children's outcomes in school, or children's interactions with peers is not known.

A clear understanding of children raised in SAHF households is needed in teacher education training. Schools need to reach out to fathers, especially SAHFs. Chesley and Flood (2017) stated "institutions such as schools, health care facilities, or

community centers may be gendered in the sense that they reach out to or support the parents they assume are most involved in children's care, often mothers" (p. 511).

Similarly, Lau (2016) found preschool teachers reaching out to involve mothers more than fathers.

Increased knowledge of SAHF involvement in their children's lives would enable teachers, administrators, and support staff to more appropriately involve fathers, particularly SAHFs. Fathers engage in activities with their children differently than do mothers, such as in play settings (e.g., Doucet, 2006; Doucet & Merla, 2007; Fagan et al., 2016; Knop & Brewster, 2016; Kroll et al., 2016; Marsiglio, 1991; Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016; Stevens, 2015; St. George et al., 2016) and gender (e.g., Kroll et al., 2016; St. George et al., 2016; Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016). Teachers can design homework assignments in which SAHFs may partake more readily, thus increasing the potential academic success of their child. Lau (2016) noted the importance of teachers reaching out to fathers in Hong Kong, indicating teachers should encourage father involvement in their children's schooling through conversations and helping with homework.

### **Future Research**

There is a need to focus on the experiences of children of SAHFs. Research has focused on father involvement (e.g., Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016; Rane & McBride, 2000) and SAHFs (e.g., Chesley, 2011; Chesley & Flood, 2017; Latshaw, 2015). However, information relating to children in the care of a SAHF is still lacking. This study adds to the literature through direct observations of children in the care of a

SAHF. Through these direct observations, information is revealed about SAHF-child interactions. Giving insight into the life of a child in the care of a SAHF such as caring for the physical needs, emotional needs, teaching and playing. Through these interactions, SAHFs influence the social development of their child.

Future studies need to observe children and SAHF interactions and compare these interactions to children's interactions with their peers. An example of this would be the Gerrits et al. (2005) study of children and parent interactions compared to peer interactions. For example, observing how children play with their SAHF then observing how the same children play with their peers would give insight into how play with SAHFs influences play with peers. Researching peer interactions would also indicate the direct effects SAHF's have on their children's social skills.

Lastly, future studies on SAHFs should compare the interactions of fathers who have chosen to become SAHFs versus fathers who became SAHFs due to unemployment, disability (Kramer & Kramer, 2016), or simply do not identify as a SAHF. Thus, studying non-identifying SAHFs would give insight into father-child interaction differences between SAHFs who chose to stay-home and non-identifying SAHFs.

### **Summary**

With the increase of SAHFs in the U.S., studies on men as primary caretakers are critical. This study described the types of interactions between two SAHFs and their preschool children. Additionally, this study attempted to understand the thoughts, motivation and cognition, behind SAHFs interactions with their preschool children

rather than fathers being SAHFs. This study added to the literature by giving a glimpse into the lives of children in the care of a SAHF through interviews and observations of SAHF dyads.



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## APPENDIX A: INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Research Questions:

1. What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
2. What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol:

Interview Question Number	Interview Question	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question
1	How long have you been a SAHF?	Introductory Question. For demographic purposes.	
2	Tell your story of becoming a SAHF. Follow-up prompt: Did you become a SAHF by choice?	Transition Question. To determine why they became a SAHF and if it was by their choice or other factors.	
3	Describe a typical day with your child. Follow-up prompt: What makes this day typical?	Transition Question. To answer what the father and child typically do each day. May give insight into the interactions between children and SAHFs.	RQ 1: What kinds of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
4	Describe a non-typical day with your child. Follow-up prompt: What makes this day non-typical?	Transition Question. To give insight into the interactions between the children and SAHFs on a non-typical day.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
5	Describe how you and your child interact on a daily basis. If you have a video of you two interacting you could show me that. By interaction I mean “direct contact...through care-taking and shared activities” (Lamb et al., 1985, p. 884).	Key Question. To understand the SAHFs perspective of how the child interacts with him.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
6	Explain how your child tries to involve you with what he/she is doing. Follow-up prompt: Explain how you respond when your child seeks your attention. For example, if your child is playing and you are in the same room, but not actively	Key Question. To understand how the child interacts with the SAHF.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?

<b>Interview Question Number</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Corresponding Research Question</b>
	playing with your child, what might your child do to seek your attention? How do you typically respond to your child when they seek your attention? Please give me two recent examples.		
7	What are you thinking when you are responding to your child in relation to (the example stated by the participant).	Key Question. To understand how SAHFs react to their children's initiations of interaction which may give some insights to how they think about their responses to their children.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children? RQ 2: What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?
8	Explain how you believe your interactions with your child influences his/her social development.	Key Question. To understand the father's understanding of how they impact their child's social development but can include interactions between the SAHF and child.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
9	Is there anything else you would like to comment on or examples you would like to give regarding your interactions with your child?	Closing Question. To add additional information.	

## APPENDIX B: STIMULATED RECALL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Research Questions:

1. What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children?
2. What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?

### Stimulated Recall Protocol For Both Stimulated Recall Interviews:

<b>Interview Question Number</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Corresponding Research Question</b>
1	Researcher states back to the SAHF, an observed interaction between the SAHF and child. Then ask the SAHF “what were you thinking at this point in time?”	Key Question. To understand how SAHFs thought processes throughout their interactions with their children.	RQ 2: What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?
2	Researcher states back to the SAHF, an observed non-interaction between the SAHF and child. Then ask the SAHF “what were you thinking at this point in time?”	Key Question. To understand how SAHFs thought processes throughout their non-interactions with their children. To understand why the SAHF is not interacting with his child.	RQ 2: What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?
3	In this scenario (give scenario), you responded to your child with (describe response). Why did you choose that response?	Key Question. To understand how SAHFs thought processes and justify their behavior of their interactions with their children.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 2.5 and 4-year-old children? RQ 2: What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?
4	Why did you decide to do X? (X can involve an observed behavior, verbal interaction, an object, or setting). For example, why did you decide to give Johnny the stuffed rabbit when he was crying? Follow-up prompt: What were your thoughts during this interaction?	Key Question: To understand how SAHFs thought processes and behavior justification throughout their interactions with their children.	RQ 1: What types of interactions occur between SAHFs and their 3 and 4-year-old children? RQ 2: What are the thoughts of SAHFs when interacting with their children?